



EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 11.42

What a single issue (11.42) we have in store for you! This special issue is full of writings on our weekly topics, to writings that come from the soul and minds of you all, that are not on topic. This amazing publication is simply that, amazingly heartfelt and real. Thanks for your dedication to yourself and to us, the readers.

Lets get busy and send this editorial over to our good friend and colleague Will Roy, who has the duties this week to spill on this page his latest thoughts. Will!

Lately I've been seriously pondering how much of a resource we are to a lot of people. When I say, "We," I mean people who've had any brush with the law in their lifetime. I've been realizing that they're a whole lot of people making money off of locking us up. It's crazy... Even something as beautiful as The Beat Within wouldn't exist if people weren't getting locked up. We're job security for way more people than we probably know.

And the most sickening thing about it is that in my opinion the people who are employed to lock us up are just as sick and twisted as we are. They act on revenge like the worst of us. In fact, the 'best cops' are usually deemed so because they had something happen to them or their family in the past and now they're 'tough' on criminals. But it's taboo to even point these people out because when we use life altering labels like criminal, justice, and peace officer we set ourselves up in a thinking pattern that's self-destructive. They're the 'good guys' and we're the 'bad guys', so no matter what they do to us it'll be justified because in this country we're taught that you can be violent as long as it's for 'good'. Just like when we were little and we'd see the villain in a cartoon do something horrible to the superhero. We'd cringe because that ain't right — the superhero is the 'good' one. However, we'd smile, our hearts would get warm, and we'd even emulate the moves we saw on T-V, when the superhero would finally get the best of the villain — most of the time the superhero was more violent than the villain, but of course that doesn't matter when you're fighting for justice, right?

Wrong, we as a society have the responsibility to teach our children that violence is wrong even when used as a way to correct a wrong. For instance, there are a lot of people who don't understand the never-ending cycle of gang retaliation. You hurt me, I'm going to hurt you. They can't fathom how youngsters could possibly be so ignorant as to get involved with such a lifestyle that's obviously infinitely destructive. However, aren't they displaying the same kind of emotion and passion as the mother of a victim who got murdered pushing for the killer to get executed? Should there be exceptions to such a rule that when broken will only lead to the pain of another? And if there should, is it justice to let a human make that decision, keeping in mind that humans make mistakes. We all do every day...

Well personally, I think it's all wrong, but again I'm not the 'good guy' and so what I say has the least bit of credibility. But take a look for yourself — look at your surroundings, think of all the people who are getting paid in your journey through the system. There are police officers, district attorneys, court recorders, judges, public defenders, private investigators, correctional officers, parole officers, medical staff, educational staff, mental health, and even programs like ours that wouldn't exist if it weren't for us getting incarcerated. And that's just a few occupations off the top of my head. I'm sure there are hundreds more. Have you ever tripped on that?

So that's the problem, now let's talk about a solution. I'm convinced that no matter what we do, people will continue to get locked up. Hell, it's an industry and we're the product. Do you think if they came out with a new barbeque chicken sandwich at McDonald's and it sold like no other sandwich made before, they'd stop selling it? Hell no! We all know money makes the world go 'round. As much as some of us would hate to admit it, it's the truth. So if that's the case, there will be people who get locked up no matter what. And some of us may even say that there are those that really deserve to be isolated from the rest of the world. But as individuals we must empower ourselves through any venue we can. We have to give them less and less product and we do that by empowering those who are salvageable — those who genuinely want to change their old lifestyles as a way to move forward. You know, what rehabilitation should be...

One way you can do this is by writing... I know that's hella cliché coming from someone who works at The Beat Within, but it rings true. They've taken everything we have, material possessions but even character possessions such as our pride, hope, dignity, and passion. The way we gain those back is by forgetting what the 'system' people are saying about us and learning that we have good reason to be proud, hopeful, dignified, and passionate. What better way to learn that while incarcerated than by practicing introspection through the pencil. For they can take anything they want from us, the last thing to go is our minds. They can't take our thoughts, so when we record and document the only thing they really can't take from us no matter how hard they try, that's empowering. We have ultimate ownership over the ways we think and what we think about whether we're free, in juvenile hall, or in the SHU.

I bet if they found a way to physically go in our heads and plant thoughts there, they would as a sentence to a crime. But as of today, that's probably the one thing they can't gain control over. So let's record these thoughts, write them down in any form you want, but write them down. Record them before you forget the great thoughts you were thinking about. This is your power... this is your salvation until you have the ability to create your own redemption on the outs if that's what you're looking to do. Bottom line is that we need to make all these people's (even ours here at The Beat) jobs less secure because if we don't all of our children will eventually be locked up. And if not as fast as one generation then our great, great, great, grandchildren because the way things are going now

half of our country will be locked up two hundred years from now. And who the hell wants that? Not us, but the ones who are making a living off of our misery — those who are feeding their kids by taking us away from ours. Hey, just something to think about...

Thanks Will for the insightful thoughts.

Lets keep this ed note moving, and give you the 4-1-1 on this week's topics...

Topic number one, "What Keeps You Up At Night". Sometimes the world's problems can feel too overwhelming on your mind.

Sometimes someone else's problems can keep you up all the time. Sometimes your problems can feel like one of a kind.

So tell us what keeps you up, from the street to the grind.

Our second topic, "Have You Ever Lost Your Mind?"

Many of you write that being in the hall is driving you "crazy," but we seldom get any good stories about what it means to go crazy. So this week, The Beat wants to know if you have ever lost your mind. If the answer is yes, tell us what caused your breakdown, and how you thought and acted that is different from your normal self. Sometimes, people go so crazy that they require hospitalization, and other times they can hide what's going on, and nobody knows. What happened in your situation? Did other people notice any differences in you? Did you get (or want) professional help? Do you still suffer from this problem? If so, how are you handling it? If not, how did you get over it? So tell The Beat if you've ever been out of your mind.

The third topic, "Sometimes I Wonder..."

And our last topic, "The Beat Within's 'Rest in Peace' Issue" — We would like to give you writers the opportunity to pay tribute to those close and dear who are no longer with us. Sadly, too many of our friends and family members are resting in peace. This week we want you to tell us, through poetry or a commentary, about this special person(s) who is no longer with us. It is important to note, do not give us a list of names/RIPs. For this special issue we will only include respectfully RIPs that have more substance/information than simply a name.

All right, lets cut to the chase and deliver you the names of our POW (Piece Of the Week) contributors, they are Lil' Naud, Baby BI, three from Big Vic, Payne, Sammie, Mainy Hyena, Angelina, Lil' Eli, Lil' Jt, P, two from Sebastian, all from the 150 Crew. From Arizona we have Dennise and Jamal. Lastly from SF/YGC we have Mousie, two from Lil' Lazy, Mean, Lil' Shadow, Nesto, and Biggie Littles.

Before we call it a wrap, lets not forget about our latest (the 16th) editorial note writing contest. The contest question to consider writing on is, "A Letter To The President." For this contest we want you serious writers to write a letter to President Bush! It is our goal to not only post these letters in The Beat Within publication and our website, but to send them off to the White House, too! Now, do we need to suggest topics on what to talk about? Doubt it. So with this said, our contest question is all about you writing a letter to President Bush. (Don't write anything that will get you in trouble with the Office of Homeland Security...)

The contest submission deadline will be Election Day, Tuesday, November 7, 2006. As is the case with all of our writing contests, all pieces submitted will be featured in the BWO (Beat Without) section of the "big" Beat over several issues. And once all have been featured, The Beat editors will read and vote on their four favorites. From these reads, our top-vote-getter will receive a one-hundred-dollar money order. Our second place winner will get a fifty-dollar money order. And our third and fourth-place winners will receive twenty-five-dollar money orders. Good luck Santa Clara County writers!

Before we go, we want you to know yesterday, we received word from the national magazine, "Utne Reader" that we (great job Beat friends) were nominated for the 2006 Utne Independent Press Award in the category of general Excellence (Zines). We wrote the Editor in Chief a thank you email, and before you read, allow us to dedicate and close this editor's note by thanking all of you involved in making The Beat Within what it is.

Here's his reply...

Greetings. Thanks so much for your note and congratulations again on the nomination. Everyone here is not only impressed with the ambition of the project, but consistently moved by the content. I've been particularly taken with the publication. A former teacher/coach, and the son of two teachers, I believe strongly that our most important mission as a society is to educate and empower our youth—especially those at risk or trapped in the system. To make that happen, we must consider how they see the world and what they can bring to it, now and in the future. The Beat Within' accomplishes all of that and more.

I'll look forward to receiving the back issues and we'll be sure to monitor the website and keep reading. You should also know that we're looking at doing something on writing from prison in the next year and when we do we'll be sure to get in touch.

Peace,
David Schimke

All right friends, fingers crossed we win! Shhh!

This RIP issue goes out to all the souls resting in peace that were mentioned in this issue, RIP. Now lets hope us readers still on earth who have lost someone close and dear will devote the rest of our long life to living life free and legit, it can be done too!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

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www.thebeatwithin.org

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A Life In Jail I Call Hell

I wake up thinking how's my family is doing
how my son is doing.
All I can do is hope that they are fine and taking care
of each other.
I eat this food they call good for us.
I go to school but the teacher is as dumb as I am.
But all through the day I still think about my life.
If I want to be a drug dealer,
a no good father
that be locked up
all through his son's life,
or if I should step up to the plate and be somebody
in life.
Now it's time for lunch.
Do I feel like eating this cold ass food
or should I take it down
to my room and think
about my future,
of what I want to be.
So I just eat the food
for the energy.
Because at the end of the day we got this so-called
LME
where we work out for an hour.
It be hella hot.
It make you don't even want to do it
but you won't get rec and seconds on food if you quit.
Now it's shower times,
a whole lot of ninjas walking around in a towel,
I got to take a shower with three other ninjas and my
self.
I don't even know them
so I got to be alert and watch my back
because you don't know who likes you.
Now it's dinner
the same 'o' shhh
we had two days ago.
Do I want to eat it?
I ain't got no choice
but to eat it
or I'm going to be starving and have no energy.
Now it's rec
I only have fifty-minutes to do my thing,
that's writing a letter,
making a phone call and using the bathroom.
Now it's last head call and I got to take a piss
then go back to my room and think about my life
and the next day to survive to the end.

-Baby BL, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Baby BL, you truly step up to the plate with this piece! We want to hear more from you, now that we know what talent you have for opening up and sharing your ideas on the page. Keep your heart and mind open for yourself and The Beat. You are already somebody in life - the question remains, what kind of life do you want?

Why Do We Have to say RIP?

Why is everybody havin' to say RIP to one of our loved ones, or to a close friend?

We're too young, we should not be havin' to go through this, so many youngsters diggin' this ain't how it's supposed to be, something is wrong. We turned down a one-way street, and on this street every time we turn around some one gettin' put to sleep. But why? World War ain't shhh, compared to the war we gon' through, but yet they fightin' for something and they got more weapons than we do, but here we are on the streets of free will, killin' each other over some BS.

Is there something out their messin' with our heads bra?

Or is there some kind of dysfunction?

Or is it that we're puppets on a string, doin' someone else's dirty work?

There is some kind of twist out there that all of a sudden comes 2000 and we want to start killing each other. it's not gettin' us nowhere we need some kind of help.

Rest in Peace so-and-so is all you hear, and it ain't old ass people either, it's youngstas sayin' RIP to one of their dead potnas, it ain't supposed to be in our vocabulary so early. It's not safe be strapped up and be ready to die, or say f- it, that life ain't right. Rest in peace you all. Stay strong and safe.

-Lil' Naud, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Once more, young Arnaud, you take your personal pain and turn it into a howl that speaks for all the youth owwho have suffered losses. This is an incredibly strong poem, full of grief, rage and insight. All these deaths are obscene - a blemish on our country, on our state, on everything America is supposed to stand for. And the sad thing is that it is our generation who put you in this position, but it is YOUR generation who must find a way out. That means you, Arnaud, you and other people like you, who think there is something wrong with the way the word is, and wants to change it. But in order to change the future, you will also have to change your present - and ask yourself if you are really serving your loved ones by pledging street loyalty to a turf or a squad. What do you think?

Thoughts Running Through My Head

Every day here before I go to sleep
I can't stop thinking 'bout how dis place is weak
We got to follow rules and live with people we don't even
like
And on top of that we gotta sit in this room and think about
it all night
But it's all right
I'm doin' the time for my crime
It's hard to incorporate all those thoughts in one simple
rhyme
At first I thought it was a game full of fun
I thought I could last bein' out there on the run
But before I knew it
I got stuck back in this khaki and purple fit
I thought I'd just be here for a minute and that would be it
But now they talking 'bout sendin' me to a group home
And that shhh keeps pounding in my dome
I miss my homies; I wonder what they be doing without me
But I'm kinda glad tha po-po got me
'Cause who knows, maybe my homies woulda really had ta
ride without me
I was on the wrong path, headed down a steep hill
But bein' here forced me to realize I was wrong
And that's on da real

-Mousie GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: So for you the hall is not as bad as some say it is because at least spending time here has helped you see what you were doing was just going to get you back up in the same old place. So when you get out, don't forge the words you have written here. Remember that there is nowhere better than home - the home of your choosing. What specific changes do you envision for your life when you get out of here?



Extreme Love

Finally night falls. I'm put in my cage an' left alone
 Just me myself and I... with the company of my thoughts
 As I lie back on my bed, I look at the ceiling
 Then for a brief second I close my eyes
 I take a deep breath and open them back up again
 I look out my window,
 Look up at the pretty blue dark starry sky
 The beautiful moon looks amazingly big like never before
 Thoughts of my special one — the one I would die and kill for — comes to my mind
 I could see you here, I could feel you near
 I could feel you lying next to me with your head resting on my chest
 I hear your voice calling me, "Daddy kiss my forehead!"
 You fall back asleep; you look so cute and peaceful
 I hug you so tight that I never want to let you go
 Then suddenly I hear a voice... I come back to reality
 I'm still in a cage by myself
 Tears start running down the side of my face
 My heart aches
 I curse myself for getting into this mess
 I'm facing a year and a half and that's the least
 I'm sorry I let you down
 I'm hatin' myself, for I won't be there
 When you take your first step
 Or when you turn one and two
 But know that you are my heart, love, an' life
 I love you son, I really do Baby Lazy, from your Dad

-Lil' Lazy B5, SF/YGC

From the Beat: This sad but beautiful love poem to your son reminds us all of the life-long pain that can come when you don't consider all the possible consequences. The choices you made have put you in this terrible position of having to be separated from what you love the most — and worse, put your son in the terrible position of having to pass those important milestones from infancy to childhood without you in his life. All we can say, by way of comfort, is that you have managed to turn your pain into art, which is probably more comfort to us than it is to you.

Our Love

when our eyes met, it was an instant connection
 you was not just another girl that i added to my collection
 before, i didn't believe in love at first sight
 but that was before i met you that one stormy night
 i asked if you needed some help, you said yes
 i gave you my jacket so you wouldn't ruin your dress
 i got to admit you had me impressed
 you held my full attention like i was possessed
 as we took the drive, i got to know you more
 you had me so hooked, that i even opened your door
 it was more than a physical attraction
 you gave my mind a complete satisfaction
 i wanted our love to go to another level
 make a good kid want to be a rebel
 no other girl could compare
 had all the other guys envious with their stares
 it might have been luck that we met
 but letting you go is the thing i regret

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Just from reading your eloquent poetic voice, we readers too regret you made the wrong choice. At the time other choices seemed perhaps more pressing, but those other choices now as well have you stressing. So, you use this time to go over your mistakes and learn your lessons. And in that context you see that when you let her go, you gave up a major blessing.

Cold World

Is it here where I belong, a cold world full of cold thugs?
 Is it here where I belong, a cold world we're like vampires
 thirsty for blood?
 Is it here where I belong, a cold world where the government
 has money for war but they can't feed the poor?
 Is it here where I belong, a cold world within a cold world
 called USA where the browns and blacks got no hope?
 Is it here where I belong, a cold world where nobody wanna
 die 'cause we're scared we not make it to the paradise?
 Is it here where I belong, a cold world where pullin' the
 trigga is the best sport?
 Is it here where I belong a cold world where moms are
 killin' their sons an' sons are killin' their moms?
 Is it here where I belong, a cold world where we make girls
 become 'ho'es just for the almighty dough?
 Is it here where I belong, a cold world, a cold country in this
 cold place we call Killaforntia state?
 Behind these walls in this cold hell that they called it cells
 where we ain't got no voice?
 Is it here where I belong, a cold world with this cold system
 where my voice can only be heard through The Beat Within?

-Lil' Lazy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: These questions tear at our hearts, and the clear answer to all of them is, "No, you do not belong in the cold world you described." In fact, nobody belongs in such a world, and it the shame of this rich country that anyone has to occupy this kind of cold world. If The Beat is your only voice box, then use it to the fullest to say all that's on your mind. Through living in this cold world, you know things that most people (and certainly most politicians) don't even want to hear, so you have a responsibility to tell them what you know! The only line in this very tight poem that we can disagree with is the part that says blacks and browns have no hope. You always have hope — and the fact that there are blacks and browns who have made it in this society (in politics, arts, sports, business, education, etc.) should tell you that it is possible, even if it's a lot harder. So, in the words of Jesse Jackson, "Keep hope alive."

Rest In Peace

What's up Junior? How's life been treating you up there in paradise? When I found out you got shot, I was locked up in juvenile hall. So I didn't get to go to your funeral. I was so upset that I couldn't go, I beat hell of people from Hayward to Oakland that was there.

Man, we was just talking about how hell of homies been getting killed over bullshhh! I remember when we was at Food Max, and you were hell of looking around because you said someone was after you. Then you ran out the store because you seen one of your enemies. You said you didn't bang, but people was looking for you in Oakland. I told you to just stay in Hayward at my house, but you went back to Oakland. Then the next day a got locked up, and a couple of weeks later I got the bad news.

When I got out, I kicked it with your older brother. I was about to get a "RIP shirt". I just want to say thanks for having my back even though I/we don't bang a color. And thanks for supporting me to do right. Rest In Peace, Junior. I'm going to get out and go back to school and do good. Still I sometimes wonder when I'm going to die, but until the I'm going to do good.

-Payne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We've never printed an RIP piece that wasn't painful to read, but this one is especially painful. He didn't bang a color but had folks trying to kill him! And you told him to stay out of Oakland, where he had funk, but he went anyway! And he tried to help you do good in life, but it sounds like he messed up his life to the point where he lost his life to a killer. (And folks wonder why we won't print the name "Killa" — duh! — because people are dying behind that bullshhh! Like being a "killa" is something to be proud of? Nah, that's just shows how much prison culture has taken over the street and its young hustlers aka thugs and gangsters.) It's all bad when it comes to that. We wonder why people don't leave the Bay Area altogether when it hits that point, but your friend wouldn't even stay in a safe home in Hayward! The insanity of it all is truly heartbreaking. But we can't praise you enough for your decision to do good until the day you die, which we hope won't be for another seventy or eighty years, with great grandchildren telling the story of how you survived the mean streets of your youth because you decided to do good.

The Power And The Responsibility

Sometimes I sit back and just wonder where the hell is this planet going? Government calls my misguided people some "terrorists" for being a part of a gang, while Bush crashes two planes into the Twin Towers, one into the Pentagon, and the other one "gets taken over by heroes," the one that happened to be heading towards SF, California. But the terrorists turned around and went for Washington D.C. The passengers decided to rebel and sent the plane crashing a long way from there.

Why did the plane go so far from its starting point and turn back when it was already far, far away? Maybe so Bush could say, "They were heading towards my home, but the fellow Americans saved me," or some bs like that.

If you don't believe that Bush knocked down the Towers, then you probably haven't seen "Fahrenheit 9/11." It shows documents of Bush chillin' wit' the Bin Laden Family. It tells you how Osama Bin Laden was in America on 9/11/01, and after a few days he was gone to Afghanistan... What the hell?

Have you ever tripped that Osama is supposed to be in Afghanistan on the run? That Osama's little tribe was the one that attacked America? What the hell does Iraq have to do with them? Iraq didn't even say anything that resembles a threat towards America, see, but no one ever asks questions. We don't care. We don't care that America is runnin' out of troops, so now they come to the ghettos to hire the same people they are trying to put in prisons, the poor people. We don't got nothin' to lose and we livin' in poverty, so what the hell, we might as well "serve this country." This ain't our damn country!

What the hell has this country done for us? Kept us in slavery, put us in jars so they can make money, stuffed us into ghettos and sold us guns so we can kill each other, released us when we have gun charges and give us 25-life when we actually use them? The same country that cleans up the suburbs and builds new streets, saves the environment but ignores us all inside the ghetto. Our minds that rot from seeing the same shhh every single day, and from drugs so easy to get... from an emotional pain that will never go away because the mother is a crackhead? Or maybe she's dead. Maybe she just left us to grow up to live a messed up life just like her, and us to have kids so they can go through the same shhhh?

All of these problems that we go through every day, and who the hell cares? I hope you don't expect Bush to come up with a plan for us. But oh, I think Arnold Schwarzenegger cares about us enough to create a plan that will help us! Prisons! Oh goody, we're saved! Two more prisons for us to fill up.

And if they don't catch us, they ain't trippin'. They know we will go off and kill another one of us, another person who is probably related to us even though we might not know. But it don't matter it's just another sucker. He gonna die in this little ghetto and so am I. It's a trip, though, 'cause we actually proud of that. More proud of a reputation for killin' somebody of our own race than being proud of our culture.

How the hell can you say I'm proud to be Black or to be Latino or a Chicano when two nights ago you killed a Black man, or a Brown man, or got into fights with each other, jackin' each other like some out-of-their-mind dope fiends lookin' for a hit? Really, you should be givin' that little kid 50c so he can get on a bus to go home. Or buy him a candy bar to show him that life ain't hopeless. At least we got each other.

Reality is nasty, but really, you just sold him his first Ex pill so you can get some weed and clothes. Really, you just told one of your young homies to go jack him so you can sit back and laugh for a few seconds. We need to really look at what we really doin'!

Slavery has come a long way. Years and years people tryin' to fight the systems, tryin' to show people that we should be treated as humans, people givin' every single last bit of effort to become free from racial slavery: Martin Luther King who spent his whole life helping his people to be treated as decent humans; the thousands and thousands of people at his marches getting beat for standing up — and none of them had ever even touched those grimy-ass cops back.

That's what you call dedication. Those people were willing to give their lives for us. Those people and countless other people gave all that they had to make a difference. They didn't say, "Oh, I'ma try to end slavery." They put every single last bit of effort they could produce to stop slavery. Even though slavery still exists, and racial slavery

DOES INDEED exist even though the government does it secretly, at least we got chances. We got hella chances.

We got chances to become whoever the hell we want to become. But our ignorance won't let us. You know how disrespectful that is? We had people sacrifice so much shhh for

us, and now we got a chance to prove ourselves humans, to prove we deserve better. But what are we doin'? Killin' ourselves!

Ever since the 1700's, America has been torturing the Native people of this country, torturing anybody they came across. 50 years ago we couldn't have the same job as anybody else. We couldn't be businessmen.

I'm telling y'all, man, this shhh we doin' is disgraceful. But I mean that's what they want. What, like 300-400 years or so, the European governments, or American government has been at the top. 50 or 40 years ago they decided to change their minds? Hell nah! That's why we still living in cramped-up apartment buildings while all the other people get two-story houses with front lawns and backyards. That's why they ain't makin' any kind of effort to help us out and sending us to prisons instead.

But if we were smarter, we would realize this shhhh, and actually act as decent brothers and sisters instead of some pill-poppin' cavemen who just does what the next man does. We all following each other down some stairs back to slavery by actin' like this way towards each other. If anything, we should be actin' like this towards not America, but the American government.

Realistically, we should be actin' out about all these laws that can get us juveniles 25-life in prison. Protest about shhh. And more importantly, most important of all, is we should be educating ourselves. Not just school, but about what the hell is goin' on around us. We live in this world and in this country, shouldn't we know what laws it has? The new laws it's creating and about it's past?

We should know about so much shhh, but we don't. But we can. We only got a limited time before we all dead, all little dope fiends, or all locked up. Ain't nobody gonna do it for us. So today we can go back to our rooms and just forget all this shhh I've been sayin' and worry more about a bathroom call with no intentions of improving ourselves, or our genocidal behavior. Or tonight, tonight, right now — not when we locked in a prison cell with 15 more years to do, not when we finally seen enough people that got killed, not when we 55 years old and wonder what the hell have I done with my life, and not when we 18 years old because we all of a sudden adults — but right now!

As we sit we can say to ourselves, "The life as I have been livin' has gotten too far. My life ain't meant to be lived like this, hurtin' people who grew the same way as me but happened to be in another neighborhood or ghetto that the United States government has built so I can act all wild and crazy like this. Today I will take my first step towards rehabilitating myself for the bettering of myself and not nobody else. I will not ignore the truth about what I have been doin' and where it can lead me, and how much it affects the people that I love and the people I should start to love. Today I will go to my room and simply think about my whole life and what I want in life and who I am. Not the people we see in music videos, but ourselves."

Take all this hip-hop and rap and thug type shhh away, and then ask yourself who am I? The person who you are behind what everyone wants you to be might be the person who is ready to make a change or take a step in that direction. Now you got the knowledge about a few things that's goin' on and enough to make that first step, which could turn into a life-long journey. If we continue to do what we do, we can only blame ourselves for the downfall of our races.

-Mean B4, SF/YGC

From the Beat: We're very happy to see someone of your age interested in national and international affairs, but still, you just can't state as fact that the U.S. Government is responsible for 9/11. Many people believe that to be the case, as you do, and many do not. We have seen "Fahrenheit 9/11" and we still believe that what you wrote is only your opinion and your speculation. Of course, you are entitled to your opinion and your speculation, just as long as you don't try to pass it off as fact. It may turn out to be true, but at this moment, it's just one of many theories. We do, however, absolutely agree with you about how we got tricked into going into Iraq when Iraq had nothing to do with 9/11 [and the government knew they had nothing to do with it; so we agree that this is Bush's unjustifiable war]. We also agree that Americans too often accept what we're told because we don't know how to think critically, to challenge what our government tells us — or, as you wrote, we don't care! But you DO CARE, and your care comes through loud and clear. You care that women couldn't even serve on a jury until recently, or that some people lose their right to vote (mostly people of color) if they've ever gone to prison. You probably even care about the struggle for gay rights, because you have put two and two together, and seen that it is all the same fight — freedom from oppression! That makes you a very special person, and one who might make a difference in the future (and might even be making one in the present). Keep using that powerful anger of yours to educate yourself and challenge what is rotten. Keep reading as much as you can, from newspapers to history books (we think you would particularly like a book called, *A People's History of The United States: 1492-Present*, by Howard Zinn), and watching as many documentaries as you can. Just keep expanding your mind and your base of knowledge. (By the way, we took the title from a speech by Abraham Lincoln in which he told his fellow Americans following the Civil War about the consequences of slavery. He said: "We, even we here, hold the power and bear the responsibility.")

Ain't No Turning Back

Been down for too long, ain't no turning back
If I could, I would just remember that it's just been so
hard for me this whole year
My mom crying over the phone and she got
uncontrollable tears
She remember that baby boy who used to be good and
quiet
But now being bad, evil, cold and defiant
Such a precious baby, never was a problem
Hit that age when only fighting would solve 'em
Went from As and Bs to Ds and Fs
Went from a honor student to the one that started mess
Need to relieve the stress, and relax my mind
'Cause right now I'm running out of time
I'm getting closer to eighteen — two years, two months
and 19 days
I believe In God, but I hardly pray
Got family that's missing me while I'm locked up and
incarcerated
All my familia and friends right now are devastated
'Cause their baby boy walks around like he grown
I chose this path so I'm going to have to walk it alone
Playing tricks with my dome, can't sleep at night
Evil corrupting my mind, it's not a pretty sight
I just want to do right but it's so hard
But I might live long if I play the right cards
Doing my time in YGC
78 days left, and I'm off to the streets
(To be continued...)

-Lil' Shadow B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What we like about this piece, Lil' Shadow, is that it reveals the things that are pulling you in different directions. You want to do right, but the streets are holding onto you, and keeping you locked up. All we can hope for is that you think really hard about the effect your actions are having on your family (not to mention the serious effects they're having on you), and that examine your belief in God to try to understand what "belief" means and whether that belief imposes any special obligations or responsibilities that you are failing to meet...

Stuck

i'm stuck between a rock and a hard place
you might not see all the anguish on my face
but it's there
don't nobody seem to care
i'm nothing but a lonely soul
trying to achieve my goal
can anyone out there in the world relate
are you strong enough to not take the bait
hangin' by a thin thread of the rope
never known to give up hope
can't get out, always seem like i'm stuck
always on my toes, swing before i duck
swing my way out of this ditch
feeling like a knock who can't stop his twitch
i got to keep it movin', still got a chance
keepin' it movin' like i'm tryin' to dance
but all i want to do is get away
should have been serious, but i chose to play
shhh always happens, it's just another issue
no more tears, no more waste of tissue

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In heaven, tears are an intellectual thing; jewels in the crown of a spiritual king. And tears of remorse sparkle brightest, for they teach the lessons that reach the highest. You are a warrior now of intellect, who once fought with weapons below but now above his neck. It's not that you forget in a place like this, the power of a rolled up fist; but the best are not content to stay stuck in the ditch they dug yesterday. There will always be tears in a warrior's life, but a spiritual warrior employs them to rise, from level to level, from hell to on high. Do not give up on mental fight, for it alone can set things right.

How Many More

How many more innocent victims do we need to make
cry?
How many times through a bullet proof glass can a mom
tell her baby goodbye?
When is enough enough? When will I learn?
When can those close to me stay without getting
burned?
How many doors can I stop myself from stepping
through?
How many times can I wonder when the next time is that
we will touch?
Why do these non contact visits seem to hurt me so
much?
How many more lonely nights can I take?
How long before those who love me realize they have
made a mistake?
How many lights at the end of the tunnel can I pass by
only to see miles of darkness with no stars in the sky?
How many judges will I say sorry to and that it will never
happen again?
How much longer can I count on a picture to be my best
friend?
How many more prisons can they possibly build?
How many more collect calls will my family accept
before they realize I am not coming home?
How many more people are going to fall in my hold of
mistakes?
How many more kids do we have to take away from their
mothers?
How much more can I take in my life until I break down
and cry?
How much longer will my little sister and little brother
have to cry?
How many more times are we going to come back until
we realize it is not worth the heartbreak?
So many questions left unanswered with no clue

-Dennise, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Dennise, this is a wonderful piece of writing. You are right, there are so many questions but they do have an answer. Some have several answers but you have to look into your heart to find them. When you increase your feelings of self worth and self esteem and learn to love yourself, then you will stop yourself from making harmful choices.

RIP Ju-Smokes

I had a cousin. He was from Oakland. This happened in 2001. I think I was only about eleven years old, but anyways I use to stay in Acorn wit' my sister.

My cousin, Ju-Smokes, used to always come and get me and my nephew and take us out to eat and stuff like that. He used to get dough, and ninjas started hating on him 'cause he was getting dough and busting heads at the same time

But anyways one night my cousin was warming up his car. We was all in his baby'momma' house 'cause I had went over there with him to get something, or I think he was just stopping by, but we was over there for a couple of hours before we got ready to go. He went outside and started his car up — and that's when we heard shots! Hell of them! And he ran halfway in the house and said, "I'm hit! I'm hit!" And it was over. He died. RIP Ju-Smokes.

-Sammie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The price of living that life of "getting money and busting heads" is yourself winding up dead at a young age, or locked away for year after year in a cage. We're sure Ju-Smokes will live in your heart forever, but if you can learn a lesson from his tragic death, it will be the greatest blessing and most valuable gift you'll ever get — quit the game for your health, go legit and accumulate your wealth legally and you'll stay alive and free! RIP Ju-Smokes.

I Wish Life Was Like This

Peace and quiet.
No gang banging.
No body getting shot.
No Bloods or Crips.
Just peaceful.
One day it will
but not in my life time
or maybe not in my son's life time.
But it will happen.
See the world is like a game.
People getting shot at
like that game (Grand Theft Auto).
The only thing I can do is pray to God
that my family don't get shot,
stabbed, or even drown and that's all I can do....

-Jamal, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: We hope along with you that life one day will be peaceful. And prayer is important, we just hope that you don't completely leave it up to others to make it peaceful one day but will make your contribution as well. Someone once said, instead of cursing the darkness, light a candle. Let's not wait for others to lay down their arms and then we will do it, let us make the first move.

Another Day

(dedicated to my lil' ninja
gee-money
keep your head up brah
i'm praying for you always)
praying to see another day
mom's cryin'
i don't know what to say
about ten people died
in the month of may
but that's the life we live in the bay
don't go left
go the right way
a hundred and twenty-one bodies
in the grave they lay
died before their hair turned gray
trying to make it to see the year two thousand eight
their eyes are closed
never again they will wake
died at thirteen
unable to cut their birthday cake
can't die now
i have too much at stake
but seeing my friends die
makes my heart ache
they're living life too fast
slow down
hit the brakes
one minute they're alive
the next they vacate
got hit a couple of times
on your body they operate
things are coming down on you like a earthquake
when will this world change or do i have to wait
stop now before it's too late
god please help us
i get on my knees and pray
hoping that each of us will see another day

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your vision's been turning darker over these weeks and months of incarceration, but certainly no darker than the reality far too many youths are facing in these urban streets where death comes sudden, often and too soon, and life leaks from young bodies like truth from open wounds. Who can afford to wait even one day? Now let us pray, along with JT, that the world will change, beginning with me — today. And thank you, JT, for breaking it down unforgettably, in poetry as powerful as a slave's desire to take his stand in the Promised Land and be free.

Is God Listening?

Money, drugs and pain keep me up at night
fighting with my girl, arguing with my Mom,
popping pills to take away the pain,
smoking to relax my mind
on the block,
all night hustling
with older cats,
watching out for the boys,
trying not to get got.
Looking at life from different angles
playing the game like chess,
my life is not all that great.
Sometimes I feel like crying,
but I hold it in
to keep myself from looking soft.
I pray every night,
but it feels like God ain't listening.

-Lil' Boogie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is one of the most honest, brave pieces we've read in a long time. It's not long, but it doesn't need to be, because you're saying what so many people feel but are too afraid to admit, because like you say, they don't want to look soft. But you have the courage to do it, to look inside and face all the problems, and also you understand something a lot of people don't. A lot of people think they smoke all night because it's "fun", they don't even realize how much of it is connected to the pain. As for saying that you think God isn't listening... maybe you've heard this before, maybe you haven't — but there is a saying that God never gives us more to deal with than we can handle. Do you think that's true? Do you think that you have the power, inside you, to change the things in your life that hurt? We're not saying do it alone — people weren't meant to be alone — but with the help of family, church, a program, a counselor? What do you think? In the meantime, thank you for a very powerful piece.

Why Are People Dying?

People are dying 'cause other people choose to solve their problems wit' a gun. These days if you fight a person and win, nine times out of ten, they gon' try to bust you when they get a chance — some people just shoot, not to get beat up!

So many people I know have been killed over dumb stuff. I know all of this 'cause I'm a youngsta, and I know how youngstas think. Ninjas just getting pistols and goin' bad on anybody who they think disrespecting them. I have seen people do the dumbest stuff wit' a gun! I saw somebody rob somebody just so they could shoot 'im!

Ninjas just got the game twisted. They think guns is toys. Most of these ninjas is livin' by the gun — and dyin' by gun.

-Lil' Eli, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for writing such a powerfully honest piece. It is out of control, this culture of violence built on top of generations of poverty and a culture of survival by whatever means necessary. However, as you point out, the gun is not a tool for survival. Its quick rewards are an invitation card for rivals to go dumb with a loaded gun. It's hard to imagine a culture sicker than children roaming the streets itching to pull the trigger.

RIP Steven

november tenth, a cold dark night
i could feel that something wasn't right
that night many hearts did cry
when we learned we had to say goodbye
the body is dead but life goes on
goodbye steven, goodbye my friend
you were so young, goodbye steven
a few days later, all the citizens came down
to watch as you, old boy, were buried in the ground
a brother lost a brother, a friend lost a friend
a mother lost a son, but steven's soul will never end
goodbye

-P, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is a solace to know, not time and loss but eternity is the home of the soul. And yet, the transformation is absolute, and here on earth there is no substitute for the brother, friend and son, you knew and loved in the flesh as Steven, RIP.

Theme For Max

Dee Dee said
Think right
Just, write

I wonder if it's that simple
I'm seventeen, mixed, of Oakland
I went to school there, then the 'dro, now here
In this prison, this cage
I am surrounded by the majority
The road leads up to camp, down to my home
Near Bayfair, a duplex
but now a complex, of brick, metal
Max unit with no exits
In my cell, sprawled out, to write this page
It's not easy to see the truth, to know what's true
I have one opinion, you have yours
We're not the same, unless, biologically
But even that wavers on some inclination
Of what's right or wrong.
You're not me, you're not me, are you?
I differ in many ways
I'm the majority, you, minority
Your vote counts, mine does not.
I'm a statistic, it's true.
Although I'm capable, I still fall into your hypothesis
Mexican: capable of hard work. Majority
French, artistic, Italian, able to learn, calculate minorities
Native, wise. African, with much pride.
Majorities with the white man's mind
And I still don't comprehend.
Confused, no! Ignorant, maybe
Illiterate, never. Because I learn from mistakes
Mine and yours, his, hers.
That's what history's written for.

Written for DeeDee
2006

-Mainy Hyena, 150 Crew

From The Beat: More than 50 years ago, Langston Hughes, arguably the best black poet of the century, wrote a poem in response to a white teacher who wanted him to describe himself in one page... through his answer he gave voice to a generation of young people just like him, and began what

would become an extraordinary literary career. With your update of this famous poem, which we are reprinting here Beat readers can compare the two and see how intricately you wove your ideas with his form, you step into the ring with one of our greatest poets. As art should, your poem opens the door to more questions, questions that you may want to explore in later poems. What are the biggest mistakes ("mine and yours, his and hers.") you say you've learned from? Do you think we are all doomed to see each other through stereotypes and prejudices - or is there a way to bridge that gap? If there is a way, what do you think is the bridge?

THEME FOR ENGLISH B

By Langston Hughes

The instructor said,
Go home and write
a page tonight.
And let that page come out of you—
Then, it will be true.
I wonder if it's that simple?
I am twenty-two, colored, born in Winston-Salem.
I went to school there, then Durham, then here
to this college on the hill above Harlem.
I am the only colored student in my class.
The steps from the hill lead down into Harlem
through a park, then I cross St. Nicholas,
Eighth Avenue, Seventh, and I come to the Y,
the Harlem Branch Y, where I take the elevator
up to my room, sit down, and write this page:
It's not easy to know what is true for you or me
at twenty-two, my age. But I guess I'm what
I feel and see and hear, Harlem, I hear you:
hear you, hear me—we two—you, me, talk on this page.
(I hear New York too.) Me—who?
Well, I like to eat, sleep, drink, and be in love.
I like to work, read, learn, and understand life.
I like a pipe for a Christmas present,
or records—Bessie, bop, or Bach.
I guess being colored doesn't make me NOT like
the same things other folks like who are other races.
So will my page be colored that I write?
Being me, it will not be white.
But it will be
a part of you, instructor.
You are white—
yet a part of me, as I am a part of you.
That's American.
Sometimes perhaps you don't want to be a part of me.
Nor do I often want to be a part of you.
But we are, that's true!
As I learn from you,
I guess you learn from me—
although you're older—and white—
and somewhat more free.

This is my page for English B.

1951

-Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

It Hurts

the knife plunges so deep, it's begging to pierce
it's not a person who's doing it, but the pain is so fierce
it's starting to twist and go in deep
it hurts so bad i begin to weep
the pain is caused by invisible thought
the wound gets dirty and my heart begins to rot
the culprit never got caught
a cure for this pain just can't be bought
it's a pain of a memory
piercing my heart for eternity
it's nothing in reality
but this thing keeps hurting me
go away, leave me alone
i feel like a gargoyle turning to stone
i got to get over the past before i move on
got to do it before the clock strikes dawn

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've got your eyes fixed on the dawning of a new day, and getting yourself ready to be free from past pain. You recognize it's not just the system stealing your freedom, but the pain you're feeling from the mistakes you're seeing clearer today than ever before. That's what doing juvenile time originally was for, not punishment but a chance to see clear what was concealed by desperation, ego, greed and fear — all the faults that led you blindly down the road that took you here, and all the deeds you will now gladly choose to do no more when the system finally opens wide the door to set you free, forevermore! Thus you turn your pain to gain — and when the pain disappears, its lessons will remain.

i don't like it when you hit me —

i thought you cared

i don't like it when you hit me — feel my pain

How It Makes Me Feel When You Beat On Me

i don't like it when you hit me — it makes me sad
i don't like when you hit me — it makes me mad
i don't like when you hit me — please don't do it again
i swear to god — i'm your only best friend
i don't like it when you hit me — it makes me cry
— but you'll do every- and any- thing to get me high
i don't like it when you hit me — i thought you cared
i don't like it when you hit me — feel my pain
i'll still love you — totally insane

-Angelina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem makes us want to cry, like something died. 'Cause you make us feel your pain, and then you go back to your abuser again. It must be hope that dies, when you tell us how bad you feel inside when he hits you — and then say you still want him with you. Yeah, it is totally insane, when you confuse love and pain. But there will come a day when your heart says no! We just wish it was today you quit both — him and meth! 'Cause they're both habits that stink to death.

The Bird With The Broken Wing

All night I lay up and sometimes I wonder...damn, every night I wonder! What exactly about? I can't call it. Yo, what's a fresh dude like me doin' in this place? All the wrong I've done...I lose months of my life over a stick-up?

I lay up wondering what it's gone be like on Valentine's Day when I come back, like Jordan? If I'm a come back like Jordan, wearing his number forty-five? If I come back when I'm supposed to?

Hell, I'd be a fool to make it through this and go out there, doin' the same shhh! I'm through bein' a fool. I've seen enough to last a lifetime in these seventeen years of livin'. I'm a dust my shoulders off and play PSP on my way to see a movie wit' my girlfriend. No worries, son! Know what I mean? I can't throw away something so special, given the chance to enjoy it a second time. I gotta live freely. I'm used to being free. Even if I don't feel free, I always been free.

Yo, I got kinda free on the paper here, huh? Well, this what I lay up wonderin' 'bout at night. I'll be back to the top in a few months. Until then, peace!

-Biggie Littles LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Nice work, lettin' loose on paper. It's like you turning on the faucet of your kitchen sink and letting the water flow. You put it down with opening up your heart and mind and allowing yourself to freely write on paper what's on your mind. We hope you will continue to trust yourself with our writing as you work on bettering your life as you get closer to the day you return home. Besides spending time with your girl, what else will you do with your freedom? Where's school in the equation? What about a job? What do you want to do with your life?

What Keeps Me Up All Night

What it do Beat? Dis yo' boy Nesto writing from YGC. Well, what keeps me up all night is the simple fact that I can't talk to all of my loved ones at night. I didn't even notice what I had on the "outs" until I came in here. Since I came in here, the judge thinks I am a menace to society with all of my serious charges.

Now they want to take me away from what means the most, witch is my family and my girlfriend. Yo' so-called patnas ain't goin' to be there all yo' life. Them ninjas ain't goin' to take a bullet for you. I have been in a position were I thought my best friend had my back for life, but then when you're rival gang comes twice-ass deep and you so drunk you past out on the ground, and when they come, everyone leaves you behind to fend for yo'self and you get stomped out and beaten with a bat, and have to get 25 stitches across yo' head and the back of yo' head. That some real love!

Yo' homies ain't going to sit there and take a bullet for you. You goin' to take it for yourself. So I'm trying to tell you, lil' ninjas, get out while you can. I know I shouldn't even be talkin' 'cause I'm in here. But I am trying my hardest to get out and quit all this gangbanging' shhh and start being about my money the smart way. All this gangbanging' shhh ain't going to get you nowhere but to da pen. Ya got to get yo' mind set on dis money that gangbanging shhh ain't goin' to get you nowhere.

I'm just speaking from da' heart. Well, it's time for me to go. I am going to holla at ya next week. But always remember money is the root of all evil.

-Nesto B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Are you a menace to society? What do you think that term means? Why do you think some have labeled you that? Regardless, we are encouraged to read that you have a clear vision of where gangbanging leads — and you don't want to go there! It won't be easy for you to redirect your steps along a new path, but then, it isn't easy for you to keep walking the same path, either. So we hope you keep this piece in a prominent place when you get out (tape it to your bedroom mirror) and read it often to remind yourself about those consequences you want to avoid. And by the way, the Bible does not say that money is the root of all evil, but the LOVE of money (Timothy 6:10). So always remember what you truly love (family) so that you don't put other things (like money, homies, the block) above them.

Inscape of an Incarcerated Mind

it would be expected for me to write about poverty
in the american ghetto
or even about the war in iraq
but i'm going to be more self-centered than that
it's nights i sit in my room
the clouds fall

the darkness surrounds my mind
and the world becomes much smaller
meditation is broken thoughts
scattered like marbles rolling along an oiled surface
having no direction but to separate
serenity is as hard to come by as the rarest jewel in
africa

hidden, cherished, desired, yet ungraspable
as a bar of soap slipping through the grip of four fingers
and a thumb sanity seems like immortality and the
greatest mental state

when all you've had to take you to another place
is four walls and a book's page

strange how reality sits on the mountain tops
waiting to be realized and understood
wishing trials ended with an april fool's card
and a cake to celebrate your survival
of yet another death-threatening moment
with love peace and happiness

-Sebastian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Not many find their way to the surrealist technique you here employ to portray the mind's fantastic desire in all its quicksilver metamorphoses, like the mythical Proteus who has the power to change shape at will, which he does with a suddenness born of the marriage of fear and desire when he feels trapped. Yet, through it all, the heartbeat of truth pounds through your dance of thoughts and images, like an African drum spreading the news from village to far-flung village.

Tell Me

tell me —

if peace is what we strive for
why is it the hardest thing to maintain and lock down
like some type of new creature yet to be discovered
tell me —

if my mind shall set me free
then why does the system lay mental shackles on my
conscience

which puts me on the verge of complete insanity
tell me —

why mothers neglect their youngin'
and expect them to live a normal life
and become successful without causing hell first

tell me —

who my father is

tell me —

why i cry

tell me —

why it's so easy to lie

tell me —

would you care if i died in my dreams one night
from overdosing on wanting so much of a better life
tell me — tell me — tell —

i bet you can't — can you

-Sebastian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: (1) If we've never lived in peace, then it is as mysterious as health to one born into disease. (2) Conscience comes from two words meaning "with" (con) and "knowledge" (science); and when we repeat the same mistakes expecting different results, we should know that's insane, with or without the system's coercion. (3) From what mothers expect of their children and what they wish for them, is woven the web of love and fear that covers the face of the clock. (4) The child is father to the man. (5) A tear is an intellectual thing. (6) Those who fear truth, lie. (7) Too much hope can kill a man who too much fears disappointment and, therefore, will not awaken from dream; when this happens, all the stars of heaven fall, extinguished, into the darkness of a sunless womb. (8) All bets are off until you see.

A Dream

i had a dream that I began to drown
 water filled my lungs and i heard no sounds
 the fish kept swimming round and round
 i felt a hard spike as i hit the ground
 now i'm in the sky, lookin' at my family frown
 lookin' for my body, no place to be found
 bury me, but i ain't in the dirt
 killing me softly, watchin' my family hurt
 they wish the best for me, but i kill their dreams
 the spoiled fruit, busting out at the seams
 but then again, sometimes they do
 i'm nowhere in the world, where did i go
 livin' in this dream, feels like i'm watchin' a show
 it's funny so i laugh
 then i feel dirty, so I take a bath
 i try to find myself back in real life
 the one who has a baby and a future wife
 but i can't, and i'm lost
 for my life, there is no cost
 vanished, where am i at
 gone forever, never to come back

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The man or boy you once were, you'll never be again, but you will return to reality if you handle the work within — as you "dream" yourself behind these walls, the battle within your heart and mind continues to call. The last judgment is not only at the end of time, it's everyday reality in our condemned minds. And yet, miracles of forgiveness and mercy are guaranteed to those who judge themselves and choose to break free of the chains that bound them to past realities — and then, with the doors of perception cleansed, forgiven and free, they mercifully exit the prison gates to enter new realities beyond the narrow boundaries of their former fate. Resurrection and judgment are one, for those ready and willing to get the spirit's work done. Even if it seems but in a dream, you open your eyes to face with true seeing, your way to reenter reality and be free!

RIP Cell

Sometimes I think that I have accepted the fact that Marcellus is dead and then all of a sudden it comes rushin' back to me, the feeling I felt when I first heard he had died. It's like it was yesterday when I was last with him, just remembering when he had popped his head out of his house, when I walked by.

And then again it was like yesteday when we were at his funeral. It's so crazy. I wish that we would not be having to go through this.

Some people say when someone dies then the next month they're just another picture on the wall. Well it's been about nine months since Cell been gone and he's been thought about every day. If someone could just tell me he is in peace, then it would help me -- but i know he isn't in peace. I just want to be able to be with him again. If I was to die right now, I would die happy knowin' i would be seein' my bra again.

This shhh is hella hard to get over. I sat up for like an hour last night, thinkin' about bra, because for some reason it all hit me again.

It was so much shhh runnin' through my mind, and one of the thoughts was what would do for his next birthday . I just hope I'm not still in the Y. I miss you bra, and you will forever be loved.

-Lil' Naud, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There was a famous doctor who said that when we lose someone we love, it takes us 5 stages to get through the pain we feel. First is denial, where we just don't believe it really happened. Then there is anger, at God, at the other people involved in the death, even at ourselves for not being able to save the person. Third is bargaining, when we try to "strike a deal" in our minds to bring the loved one back, and then there is depression, a dark phase you know well too. Finally, there is acceptance... when it doesn't mean that we lose our sorrow, or forget about the person, but we do find a way to mourn them without being stuck in all the pain that goes with it. All five of these phases are necessary, as much as they hurt, it's almost like we have to go through them in order to get past them. Some people are too afraid of all of this, and avoid the whole thing, by just burying their feelings, and others just get stuck in the anger phase. Where on this painful but necessary journey do you believe you are?

Alone

Alone
 Last night
 How to find my soul a home
 Where water is not thirsty
 And bread loaf is not stone
 I come up with one thing
 And I don't believe I'm wrong
 That nobody,
 but nobody
 Can make it out here alone
 There are some millionaires
 with money they can't use
 Their wives ran round like banshees,
 their children sing the blues
 They've got expensive doctors
 But nobody
 No nobody
 Can make it out here alone
 Everyone needs some type of support

-Dar Dar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are right, everyone needs some type of support, so where do you look for yours? Where do you find yours? Who looks to you for support Do you give it?

sideways In a cloud of smoke

sittin' in my cell
 dazed and confused
 hoping
 wishing
 praying
 where am i going
 am i going home
 why did i do this
 i really crashed this time
 i was out there hustling and smoking on that ice
 didn't realize i was gambling my freedom like i was
 throwing some dice
 now look at me
 locked up
 no more money
 no more fame
 all i got now is a bunch of shame
 nothing gained
 a lot lost
 but one thing for sure
 the game ain't no joke
 keep messin' around and get lost going sideways in that
 cloud of smoke
 and you just might choke
 at the end all you got is your family
 i finally realized my family loves me
 and they're all i need
 i love my family so much no words can explain
 so therefore i'm chalkin' the dope game

-Nicole, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Major props on a good decision, 'cause smokin' ice and livin' life are bound for a fatal collision, where something's got to go — the fiend has got to die in your heart and your mind, but it all starts with a decision to leave the dope game behind. It might take a year before you stop dreaming of smoke, 'cause addiction grabs deep down your throat with a strangle hold on your heart, the same one it's killing as long as your willing to blow clouds of smoke in the face of all that you love, as long as your brain stays insane enough to sacrifice everything worthwhile in life to firing up that pipe at any price. You've made the decision to quit, now follow through with it, no matter what — if disappointment and failure seem to come your way, say what you used to say, "I don't give a flying f—!" Just don't give up on you, 'cause staying clean is what you most need to do. All right then girl, stay strong but be cool in this cold, cruel, ever-loving world. And drop a line to The Beat Without after you get out.

Reminiscin'

I remember the times we joked and played
 Our friendship would be forever always
 From playing doorbell ditch and playin' catch and pitch
 Who knew some of us would end up in a ditch
 All bloody, messed up and shhh
 Endless conversations and water balloon fights
 Playing and talking all through the night
 Not thinking 'bout tomorrow or what happens next
 Not realizing we might need a bullet proof vest
 Man oh man, I wish we would've known
 Because when them bullets slid through, that was the
 end of all of you
 Missing you now, wishing you was here
 I say RIP and the message is clear

-Roast Beef GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Nice, very nice piece. We particularly love the details about the water balloon fights and talking through the night... It's those kind of details that bring a piece like this to life. What else can we say, except that the time between those innocent games of catch and the need for the bullet proof vest is so short but the distance traveled is so long! Can you find your way back?

Lady Sk, RIP

I would like to honor the home girl, Lady Sk. She died in a drive-by shooting. The person who shot her was from another territory. I was with her the morning she got shot.

She started talking, about crazy shhh — like what music she wanted at her funeral and what she wanted to be buried in. She kept saying that she didn't want anybody to cry.

I told her she was trippin' and she needed to stop talking that crazy shhh! I told her I needed to take care of something and would get wit' her later. She said it might not be a later. I told her I loved her.

Then I was gone that night, because I got locked up. And when I was in the LA Juvenile Hall, I found out she got shot! I was heart-broken. she was my favorite homey. Homeboys and homegirls went for payback, I'm sure.

It still hurts to think about her. She was only fifteen and a half! Rest In Peace, Lady Sk.

-Lil' Lady Skittles, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a terrible story! What a terrible waste! She was way too young to have her life end. And payback brings no one back from the grave but just sends more to a tragic end — and until it stops, the graveyards fill up with so-called enemies and best loved friends. We don't say what SK stands for, because that's the mind set that got her killed. Our enemy is not flesh and blood but spirits that fill hearts and minds with ill till blood spills.

Life

Life is a struggle for everyone
 Girl, boy, Latino Black don't matter
 We all struggle, cry tears, shed blood
 Go through life without direction
 Leading ourselves to disaster
 Ending up dead
 Locked up
 Putting money in the white man's pocket
 Set up for failure since birth

-Travieso B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We agree with everything you've said, only we would expand your definition of "everyone" — life's a struggle for white people, too, and Asians and Indians and, well, "everyone." We all cry, bleed, laugh, hurt... At the same time, it is often much harder in this society for people of color than for white people, as you say, but the most important line of this tight poem is this: We... go through life without direction." We think that is the biggest difference that causes some young people (whatever their color) to "succeed" while others "fail." But once you reach a certain age, then you have to take responsibility for leading yourself. That time is now.

Da Events Of My Last Day

Twistin' an' turnin', sweat runnin' down my face,
 One white rose surrounded by four that are red
 Atop of this wooden type of bed
 A hand touched my face, a pair of lips planted a kiss on
 my forehead
 I hear my folks cryin', tears of sorrow runnin' down their
 faces
 I hear somebody tellin' me to get up from my bed, that it
 ain't my time to rest
 I feel all this torturous flames goin' through my veins
 From my first to my last day, my life is flashin' in my head
 My name it's written all over places
 In a corner I see a picture, it's blurry an' I can't see the
 face
 But it got my name surrounded by candles an' a whole lot
 of flags
 I can hear they're talkin' about revenge
 While cryin' an' shoutin' my name drinkin' Henn,
 Poppin' thizzlez an' puffin' blunts
 They can't take the pain no more
 They want another life to be gone
 They are gonna do it out of love
 For their homie won't be among the living any more
 Everybody seems to have sorrow
 But I'm happy how my life turned out
 For there won't be no more pain the day
 The Man from the heavens call me on the Judgment Day
 Now I'm awake
 It was just a good dream with the events of my last day.

-Lil' Lazy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Damn, LL, this is such a sad and bitter portrait of what you've experienced in your short life, with a tragic resignation — even hopeful expectation — that death will bring peace. This funeral scene, including the "boys" trying to medicate their pain with drugs and drink, is all-too real and all-too frightening. Is there anything you can do from this time forward that can alter that final day's judgment? We hope you can see a way, slow and steady, to work your way out of this hole and into a real job, even if it doesn't pay what you're used to getting, and slowly build a life for yourself, one that ends with loved ones celebrating your successes and your loving family.

RIP

I lost a lot of people since day one
 Grandma was first, and that was a problem, bra
 Next was my cousins Gabby, Lisa, and Yaya
 I ain't goin' lie, it hit me hard, but now it ain't nada
 After that it calmed down for a couple of years
 But still I got silent tears
 2004 It was my lil' cousin Claudette
 I'm like, "Damn, I hope I ain't next"
 2005, the homies Caballo, Bird and the big homie Conejo
 I want to go too, since y'all taking my perros
 2006, Sharkie, Lil' Chino, Fino, and Capone
 Uncontrollable rage inside of me and quit playing tricks
 with my dome They didn't have to go... Maybe they did a
 little dirt
 But that's no reason for them to be put in a hearse
 And all of these deaths are caused by bullets
 My heart is aching to the fullest
 They were good, they looked out for me
 I miss them with all my heart until I D-I-E
 So y'all keep restin' in peace
 Nothing but love from your carnale and lil' homie

-Lil' Shadow B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There are so many dead bodies in this terrible tragic piece, that we don't know where to start. We can't imagine having a weight like this on our shoulders, and we don't know what we would do with all the emotion it would create in us. So first, we admire you for being able to take that emotion and turn it into art. This is a beautiful tribute about terrible facts. Could any of these deaths have been avoided? Has any of this nightmare had an effect on your behavior? Like what?

What Is Family?

What it do Beat? This be that vato Cartoon from San Francisco. Today's subject is what is family?

I've been locked up a long time in and out juvenile halls, and every time I get locked up I get this question by either counselors or some adult. First they say, "What is family," then "The 'hood ain't your family... they don't come and see you, they don't help you."

So I'ma tell you. When I joined the gang, the gang didn't know me and I didn't know them. Within a short time of joining the gang, they would die for me and I would die for them. People say they ain't my family but when enemies is shootin' at my homies and me, and somebody got hit, I ain't gonna leave then behind and they wouldn't leave me behind, regardless if we might die or not. When people are willing to die for you, if that ain't family, I don't know what is!

Yes, your family (aunties, uncles, cousins) come and see you when you're locked up come to court. My 'hood would come and visit me and come to court but my PO won't let them. That the same for lot of people locked up. And my homies buy groceries and take care of my family while I'm locked up, and I do the same for my homies when dey locked up. I got my family and my 'hood, and I love them both. I'll do anything for them.

Well I got to go. To all locked up, keep your head up. One love. Alrato.

-Cartoon B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a very well thought out and written explanation of why you think the 'hood is like family to you. One of the great criticisms we have of this country is that gangs too often have to fill in where real family have failed. Like the Black Panther Party in the 1960s and '70s, they provide important services (feeding your family) and emotional support (love) that is missing in too many families. But we don't much care for your definition of family as people willing to die (or kill) for you. That is true of the soldiers fighting in Iraq (on both sides), but that doesn't make them family. That makes them soldiers who, when they die, are shipped home to their families to bury, to cry over, to mourn. Finally, in the end it doesn't matter to us much whether your 'hood or gang functions like a family or not because the results of their actions leave mothers weeping and fathers in prison or in their graves. This doesn't mean they aren't families because we know too many families that are dysfunctional, and which leave their children sick, or hurt, or dead. So we're not so concerned about what you call them as much as what they do. You joined a gang you didn't know, and suddenly you had "brothers" willing to die for you. You joined a gang, and suddenly you also had enemies you didn't know trying to kill you. If that's the trade-off, we'll go it alone, thank you.

Each Day Is A Blessing

What keeps me up at night? So many different things. One thing that can keep me up sometimes is knowing that you can fall asleep tonight and not live to finish tomorrow. It's not a promise that you'll live for tomorrow.

It's a blessing to wake up everyday because so many people are dying these days and losing their lives.

So when you wake up everyday, remember that it's a blessing to open your eyes and live another day.

Another thing that keeps me up, is kinda similar to that. It's the fact of knowing one day I'm gonna die. It's hard to think that one day my life will be over.

It's also hard for me to think that one day my mother and father will be gone too. That day is most likely to come a lot sooner than mine because they're a lot older then me and have less time. But who knows, the way the world is these days, you can lose your life before you know it.

-Jj, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's so great to read something from the hall that is positive about the day! We know it's hard while you are incarcerated, but you're here to recognize how lucky you are to have your life. Keep up the faith! What's your plan upon touching down.

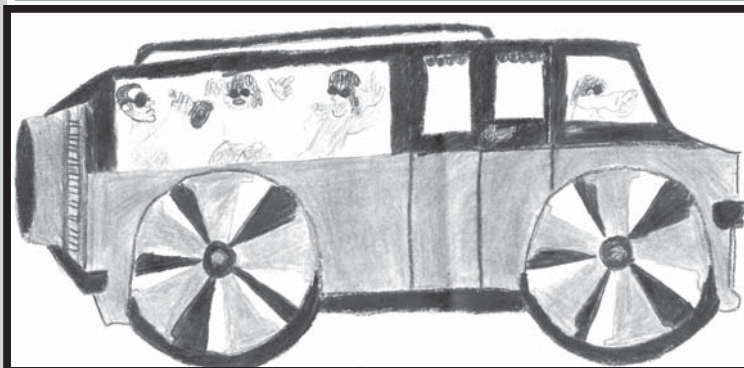
RIP Ray RIP Cell

RIP Ray — I miss you big cousin. I remember when you was alive and we used to do hella shhh. But we couldn't do too much, 'cause you was twenty years older than me. But, big cousin, I got yo' name tattooed in a cross on my arm. Man I was hella mad when I found out you was dead! I wanted to take off on hella ninjas, because I was in jail.

RIP Cell — what's up wit' it up there, brah! You know all of us down here been keeping it solid, brah. We miss you hella much, brah! We be goin' dumb everyday, but you already know how we do it, brah. Rest In Peace, all my fallen soldiers.

-Cell's cousin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, what a piece to leave unsigned! Yet we know your homies can feel your words in their hearts and minds, recognize your homie love and heave a sigh. Yet keeping it solid is not doing what they did till they died, but giving meaning to their tragic deaths by reading them as warning signs — to change your ways and stay alive (and free, the way you wanna be).



Me An' My Bra

Me an' my bra on the bus
Going through pain an' stress
Crying every day
'Cause he's not with us
I miss bra, I love bra
No matter what you say
You're always gonna be with us
So we will wait for you
Until the day is through
But I still remember
What we went through
So don't cry
Because my mama
Is always going to be by you' side
An' what you going to say?
That I don't want to change my life?
You're stupid, bra
You're going the wrong way
Remember when we were riding the bus?
Damn, I miss you, bra
Why did you have to get locked up?
We both were having fun
An' now I have to wait
Until you return to us
I love you, bra
Take it easy
And I will wait for you
Until you return to us

-Lil' Rider B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You ask your brother why he had to get locked up, which is a fine question... but here you are locked up yourself, so we have to turn that fine question back on you. Why did you have to get locked up? What are you doing to prepare yourself so that when you get out of here you can not only stay out of here, but you can also help your brother stay out of even worse places? One thing we're sure of: If you turn your life around and help your brother stay out of trouble, you will replace your mother's tears with smiles. Is it worth it?

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Sometimes I Wonder

I wonder what the world would be like if Columbus
wouldn't have "discovered" America.

Would I exist?

How would life be?

Would we have poverty?

Would Aztlan still exist?

Would bad or crime exist?

Would women be oppressed?

Or would another European

Descent claim to "discover" and

disturb our beliefs, invade our way of life

and force us to live their ways,

believe in their God and pour us into the melting pot

and we'd still end up the same...

Sometimes I wonder...

-Revolutionary Milo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow – you don't mess around do you. This poem shows the sensibility of a potential revolutionary, just the way your name says, a person who could lead a challenge on injustice, who could become a scholar and teacher of history, a person who could push the world towards justice and equality. Your fire and insights shouldn't be buried in the system, though. We love this poem, and we want to imagine you arguing these political questions late at night at a university, or at a rally, while you struggle with like minded people to make the world a better place. Time is wasting, young Milo – get out of the system and into the world, which needs people like you more than ever.

Nightmare Stuff I Did

what keeps me up at night is nightmares
not your regular nightmare stuff under your bed
but of all the stuff i did in the past
i sometimes see the people i hurt
i see myself in their position
and them doing to me what I did to them
but i always wake up before they can do that to me
it's a crazy place out there in oakland
you have to do almost anything to stay alive
when you live that life

-Lil' Joe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great poem! Great piece! When you "live that life" it's like living out a mental disease. Just as you say, Oakland becomes a crazy place, and you act crazy, too. Is it clear to you what you really need to do? Quit that life and get your mind right.

Sometimes I Wonder Why

Sometimes I wonder why my life is hard
Sometimes I wonder why I have to commit crimes
Sometimes I wonder why my mom has to suffer
Sometimes I wonder when will I change my life around
Sometimes I wonder why me and my brother have to be in jail
Sometimes I wonder why my friends are bad
Sometimes I wonder if my friends will help me or not
Sometimes I wonder will my family be by my side
Sometimes I wonder will somebody take my life
Sometimes I wonder will I ever stay out of the jail.
Sometimes I wonder will I stay out of the the hood
When I do that, I think I'll do good.
I love you bra

-Lil' Suave, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece just shows another brilliant and bright facet of the diamond that is Lil' Suave... the philosophical side that is, like you say, wondering what life is about, and what his future will hold. It reveals so much about how deep you really are – especially those last two lines.... you say you wonder if you'll stay out of the hood. Well, what would it take to make you do that? We know you love basketball, we know you want a job, we know FOR SURE you're smart enough to do well in school and go on to college if you want... do you have a place that could help you connect with these things?

The Beat Within "RIP"

My big bro rest in peace, he's been gone for some years
And I ain't scared, ashamed or shy
To shed my painful but loving tears
For the time he's been gone has been kinda hard for my
part

No matter how bad I hurt he'll always be in my heart

But Jr. said keep ya head up

Even when at times you get fed up

Sometimes I cry and cry at night

And ask GOD with all my might

Help me keep my Jesus and heaven as my final flight

-Kk GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It is never easy to have someone close to you, especially a family member, pass away. So we can understand your pain and frustration. You have written a beautiful tribute to him, but the best tribute will be for you to find a way to live your life to a ripe old age in health and freedom – and therefore keep his memory alive for many, many years to come. Keep your head up and stay strong for your brother. May his soul Rest In Peace.

RIP Grammie

I miss you, miss you so bad
i wont forget you, oh it's so sad
i hope you can hear me
'cause i remember it clearly
the day you slipped away, was the day
i found it won't be the same
i didn't get around to kiss you goodbye on the hand
i wish that i could see you again
i know that i can't
i hope you can hear me
'cause i remember it clearly
the day you slipped away
i found it won't be the same
i've had my wake up
won't you wake up
i keep askin' why
there you go, now you're gone
somewhere you're not comin' back from

-P, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes we think of death as sleep. We close the eyes of the deceased and imagine they might open again – but closed they keep, for death is not as friendly as sleep. It is a permanent parting from this world of day and night. Some say the soul enters the source of all light, but wherever she's gone, she's free from the pain of lost and found. Even as her body is laid in the ground, her soul ascends beyond earthly winds of change – in eternity, she now dwells, and only her love remains to guide you through Pisto's hell to reclaim Noah alive and well.

The Beat
Within

ALABAMA



RIP Bo

I met Bo at Camp Sweeney. When I first got to Camp, I was the youngest up there. Bo and my other patnas, used to always play wit' me, makin' me mad.

They did it to make me solid. I mean, I was already solid, but I just used to let stuff get to me. So, anyway, I started kickin' it wit' them on home passes from Camp. Bo was my patna and I looked up to him. He got down!

He used to always tell me, "Don't get mad unless somebody put they' hands on you." And I still use that rule every day of my life. RIP Bo.

-Lil' Eli, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's a pretty good rule insofar as it means, don't let people bumping their gums get you into funk, 'cause fools will always talk, but a wise man will ignore a fool and continue to walk his walk. However, taking pride in gettin down, still leads to dying young when you run with a murderous crowd. So, we recommend you walk away from trouble every single time you can. And if people say you're scared, forget them!



RIP Lil' Ant

Lil' Ant was my brah (close homie) since middle school. We went to Montera. We used to cut and go up to Madison in Sobrante Park.

At the end of the year, me and Ant both got kicked out for beatin' on these one dudes. So I went to Elmhurst while he went to Madison, the next year — but we still used to kick it.

He got killed this summer. I was hella mad when I found out. But I know brah watchin' over me. Save me a spot, brah. RIP Lil' Ant.

-Lil' Eli, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In a culture of violence, it's so hard to draw the line early enough to avoid consequences of this kind. We won't go so far as to say you bear responsibility in his death, but friends need to lead friends away from violence — 'cause old school chunkin' 'em one on one, has given way to crews funk'n' wit' guns.

He used to always tell me,
"Don't get mad unless
somebody put they' hands on
you." And I still use that rule
every day of my life. RIP Bo.

Sometimes

When I have something to tell you
I hesitate and wonder...
Just how much of my feelings
I should allow to be seen
And how you'll react to my words.

I know that I shouldn't be afraid
to tell you anything
but I'm still sort of new
at being in this situation
And I feel a little uneasy about
saying whatever's on my mind
but you know, don't you...
of my feelings for you
whether they're spoken or not
and my desire to open up to you..
with trust
and with love

-Fresh, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Another great love poem, we hope you make this girl feel as lucky as she makes you feel, and we hope you can be together soon.

In My Dreams

In my dreams
I pictured a person
who was
intelligent, good looking
sensitive, talented
creative, fun
strong and wise
who would completely
overwhelm me
with love
since dreams
can be just
wishful thinking
I did not really expect
to find one person
who had all these
outstanding qualities
but then
I met you
and not only did you bring back
my belief in dreams...
....but you are even more
wonderful than my dreams.

-Fresh, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you've met a girl who truly meets all these qualities, who truly makes you feel the way you say in this (terrific) poem... does that change things for you? Give you strength? Give you the hope that you can change your own life for the better?

Lejos Con Mi Novia

Si tubiera esa oportunidad, lo más probable es que me fuera con el pensamiento de regresar a este horrible lugar. También me iría con mi novia lo más lejos que pudiera. Me iría a la playa para poner mi mente en las olas, y no estar pensando en regresar.

Mi lugar feliz tal vez sería estando con mi novia. Puede que sea el lugar donde pueda escaparme de la realidad.

Lo que más extraño de mi niñez es andar en la bicicleta, jugar football y los regaños de mi madre.

From The Beat: Eso sería un buen lugar donde relajarse y una buena compañía. La playa es un bonito lugar donde hay mucha paz y una naturaleza bella. Esperamos que cuando salgas tomes en cuenta estos lugares tan bonitos y disfrutes más las cosas que esta vida ofrece. cosas maravillosas.

Away With My Girlfriend

If I had that opportunity, what would probably happen is I would leave with the thought of knowing I would have to come back to this place. I would also go with my girlfriend as far away as possible. I would go to the beach so I could focus my mind on the waves and not be thinking about going back.

My happy place would probably be being with my girlfriend. That's probably because that's the place where I would be able to escape reality.

What I miss the most from my childhood is being on my bicycle, playing football, and the way my mother would yell at me.

-Dimas B2. SF/YGC

From The Beat: That would be a nice place to relax and that would be some nice company. The beach is a nice place where there is a lot of peace and a natural beauty. We hope that when you get out, you take into account these very nice places and you enjoy the (free) things that this life offers, marvelous things.

... a person came and hit him in the head wit' a thick glass bottle. Then a group of people came and stabbed him a lot of times, and it was over.

RIP Oscar aka Dash

What it do, Beat! It's yo' boy Lil' Ron from the town (Oakland). Man, I just want to say RIP to my patna Oscar aka Dash. Man, I remember kicking it wit' him, just blowing!

My patna Dash had went to a party on in on the other side of town, and he was off a bottle, you know? Then a person came and hit him in the head wit' a thick glass bottle. Then a group of people came and stabbed him a lot of times, and it was over. Peace out, Beat.

-Lil' Ron, 150 Crew

From The Bear That is some crazy stuff! We hear about these cross-town confrontations where people could die or like Dash, do die behind getting high, drunk and looking for excitement. We're not blaming Dash for what happened to him, 'cause that should happen to no one! — but this rolling around looking to party isn't worth it. As for the killers, that's the lowest of cowardly acts when a crowd kills like that [then they go around calling themselves killers when not one of them was brave enough to take a stand like a man — if that's what they mean by soldier, it's a term of cowardly disgrace].

Daddy's Girl

I'm a daddy's girl
I'm his sunshine in the evening
I'm his moon at night
I'm always my daddy bright light
I'm a daddy's girl
I lean on him when times are rough
He will be the one to tell me that's enough
I'm a daddy's girl
Can't you see?
With his support I will succeed
I'm a daddy's girl
That's what people don't realize
Even if I go through thick and thin
My life my daddy will always be in

-Rosevette GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Everyone needs a little support in their life! Glad you have yours. But tell us, if Daddy is so special in your life, why did you give the system power to take you away from him? What do you plan to change when you get out so that you don't have to be separated again?

Mis Pensamientos Sobre Los Temas

Hola me llamo Franklin y soy de Honduras. Saben amigos, si a mí me dieran dos horas de libertad, conseguiría dinero y me fuera a la Greyhounds directo a la frontera con Canada. Me iría para Vancouver. Voy a ser deportado, puedes entender porque me hiría ahí.

Mi lugar feliz era el cantón. Llegábamos de trabajar en la tarde y estábamos todos juntos. En nuestro jale (trabajo), te alegras ver que todos regresan porque en este jale uno nunca sabes si regresarás. Cuando estábamos en casa, nos fumábamos nuestra mota y nos relajábamos, escuchábamos música o mirábamos televisión. Era estupendo estar con la cheves y nuestros carnales.

Lo que más extraño de mi niñez era cuando llovía. Andábamos toda la raza debajo del agua que caía del cielo, lebantando agua con los pieces. A mí carnal y a todos los demás nos encantaba mojarnos. Después nos íbamos a tomar café caliente. Eso es lo que más extraño. Que Dios nos bendiga a todos.

From The Beat: ¿Crees que en otro país tu puedas hacer las cosas correctas que no pudiste hacer aquí? ¿Qué tipo de trabajo estas hablando? Como estas hablando nos hace pensar que estabas trabajando ilegalmente. ¿Estamos correcto? Si sí, pues ya ves las consecuencias. Vayas donde vayas siempre viviras las mismas o peor consecuencias sino dejas de trabajar de esa manera. Con respecto a tu niñez, no alegramos que tengas Buenos recuerdos sobre tu niñez. Cuidate donde sea que vayas. Suerte!

My Thoughts On The Topics

Hello, my name is Franklin and I'm from Honduras. You know what, friends? If they were to give me two hours of freedom, I would make some money and I would go on Greyhound straight to the Canadian border. I would go to Vancouver. I am going to get deported. You can understand why I would go over there.

My happy place was my home. Everyone would get off work in the afternoons and we would all be together. In our line of work, you're happy to see that everyone makes it back home because in this line of work, one never knows if you'll make it back home. When we're at home, we would smoke our weed and we would relax, listen to music, or we would watch TV. It was stupendous to have some beer and be with our bros.

What I miss most from my childhood is when it rained. My whole people and I would be under the water that fell from the sky, kicking up water with our feet. Me and my bro and everyone else loved to get wet. Then, we would go and drink hot coffee. That's what I miss the most. May God bless us all.

-Franklin B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Do you believe that in another country you'll be able to do the right things that you were not able to do here? What kind of work are you talking about? Based on the way you were talking in your piece, it makes us think that you're working on something that's not legal. Are we right? Yes? Well, know you see the consequences. No matter where you go, if you continue to live the same way, you'll find the same or worse consequences if you don't stop working this way. With regards to your childhood, we're thrilled to know you have good memories from your childhood. Take care of yourself, regardless of where you go. Good luck!

Mom

I know every person locked up misses they mom and family. Me, I miss my mom very much, but I can't see my mom any more — only in my dreams and home movies. She got beat to death by her boyfriend. I wish I was there when it happened, 'cause I would have stopped everything. I wish she was still alive so she can visit me and so I can talk to her about my problems, but I can't.

I pray every night that she watches over me and my family. Also my uncle passed one month after she died. He got shot two times, in the back of the head and in the chest. I stress off that stuff every day. I try to move on but I keep having dreams of them and I can't forget it.

So y'all out there with moms, listen to what they say because they trying to help you out. So listen to everything they say and be good to them. Do anything for them 'cause one day they might be gone.

-G-Boa B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a very heavy burden for you to have to carry around. We are so sorry! What do you think it is about the say men are raised that lets them think it's all right to beat up women — even to the point of killing them? Would you ever hit a girl? And then to have your uncle go so soon after and in such a violent way! Besides wishing that your mother was still here to listen to you and comfort you, have these events changed anything about the way you want to live? We hope you honor your mother's memory by making the kind of smart decisions that don't lead to jail so that, as she looks down on you, she can see that you are finally hearing what she was trying to tell you, and she can be justly proud of you.

Sleepless Nights In Here

the darkness of the dorm
the wore down sheets and rough blue spreads
the hard mattress they give us to lie on
and this flat pillow where i rest my head
the lights keep me up
and the sound of people snoring deep
but what really keeps me up
is knowing i gotta be here for eighty more days
so eighty more nights to sleep

-Viet, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes the simple comforts of sleeping at home are enough to make us think about what we're doing wrong to have us locked up for so long where we don't want to ever be again. In eighty days, let your new ways begin!

Camp Sweeney

What's up wit' it, Beat! Yeah, it's me — I'm back. Well, anyways, let me start off by sayin' this: I'm at Camp right now and been here already for two months. This Camp program go by hella fast! I mean faster than a race car! Two months went by dumb ass quick.

Well, I'm gonna tell you how Camp is like for the people in the Hall reading this right now. Camp ain't that bad as you may think. Camp, it's cool, but when you be here for a long time, it get boring and you going to want to run. But I am not going to tell you to run or not to run, 'cause this shhh is hellla easy. That's why I don't run! And I only doing my program, not yours!

I doing this shhh for the family, so I could get out soon — but I wouldn't be doing this for no one if I just didn't steal and keep doing wrong things. Well, that's all I have for y'all today. I'll keep on writin', too. I'm back!

-Deer, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can't say we're happy you're back doing time, but we are happy that you're back writing wisdom and advice for our readers. You put it all simply and clearly without preaching, just teaching by your example. And that's very cool. Why do you think the times are going so fast? Are you keeping busy with programs, work, school, or what? We're glad you're doing so well, but really time will tell. 'Cause the key is what you do when you're out of Camp and free. How are you weekends going?

Up All Night In Here

What I'm going to write about is what keeps me up all night. I'm gonna start it off by saying what keeps me up all night is when I have to think about waking up the next morning and not seeing my lil' brah smiling at me, sayin', "Get up, brother!"

It's just dealing with the fact that I have to listen to someone else tell me when to get up and when use the bathroom — and then gives me write-up's and incident reports! Another reason why I stay up at night is because I sit down and think about all stuff that got me where I am, and I think to myself what can get me out of these types of things in the future. I just hope that my little brother doesn't have to deal with being away from the house.

Thinking about getting out and doing the same thing also keeps me up all night. I just wish that I would have listened to my moms. Then I wouldn't be in this position. And I think about the times I was going dumb, not thinking — and look where it got me. locked up!

I just want to say that if you're going to be released, finish your probation condition. Pimp that so you can go about your business. Or, if you're getting out on EM (electric monitor), pimp that and the probation. Step your game up! It's '06, and the law is not playing wit' us this year.

-Twan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You were so right on in everything you write here. Maybe the moment has come where you're finally ready to quit this cycle of coming in and out of lock up. Not only is it getting tougher out there on the streets (Oakland's murder rate is the highest in over a decade), but you've hit the stage where serious sentencing to places you don't want to go comes next. We're sure your little brother misses you as much as you miss him, but all that pain gets twisted into following in your footsteps if you're not there to show him another way. We pray when you get out this next time, you're out to stay!

Back in the Hole

Sometimes in your life you come to a point where you really try to do good from now on, and then you suffer a major setback, that puts you right back in a hole.

So I ask myself why try to do good when you only do wrong. But maybe if you do wrong there will be a right answer. But then you put yourself deeper in that hole.

So what do you gotta do in life in order to get outta that hole, and stay out?

-John, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is maybe the most important question The Beat Within can see on our pages. We sometimes think we have the answers, but that's not what really matters, is it. What matters is what YOU think the answer should be. Look how smart you are, you diagnosed your own problem like a doctor... so now, if you reread this piece and think about your life, and about the people you know who have gotten out of the pole, what did they do? What decisions did they make? And what about the ones who are still buried? What decisions did they make? Does thinking about this give you any thoughts on what you could do to dig yourself out, and stay out?

My Newborn Baby

What keeps me up all night, is my baby. My baby was born last week, and he kept me up all night when he was born! I went back to Camp the next day, and I was real tired.

I have been staying up everyday thinking about my son, wondering how he's doing. I'm always wondering if he's okay or hurt, or if he's eating enough. I went home this weekend and he kept me up all night again! He would wake up in the middle of the night and start crying because he was hungry. Then my girlfriend would feed him, and I'd have to burp him. My baby is what keeps me up all night.

-Noodle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The first few months when a baby has to be fed every few hours, day and night, can deprive the parents of so much sleep that they can hardly see right. Your girlfriend must be so happy when you're there to help with the burping so she can crawl back in bed for a change and catch a few precious moments of sleep. Still, it's a time you'll never forget, when you cared for that helpless little infant that was so totally needy and dependent on you. So stay up [ha, ha] 'cause you're doing coo', and your girlfriend, too.

RIP Auntie Janice

I miss her smiling, I miss her talking, I miss the wonderful lady I had as an auntie. I miss my Auntie Janice aka Big-O. Big-O was the nickname the people gave her, and she was my Auntie. I love her so much.

Also my heart carries her around with me. I remember when she used to come in and pick me up from Elementary school and I could hear her from a mile away because she talked so loud.

-Clem, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You managed to make us smile even while writing about a terrible loss. Your Auntie sounds like she had a huge heart, and it sounds like you do too, from the way you say "My heart carries her around with me."

When I'm Up At Night

when i can't go to sleep at night
i'm thinking about lots of things like
why i had to be a statistic
and why i can't think before i act
when i'm up at night
i think of all the times i disobeyed my parents
and all the times i stole from them
when i could've just asked
when i'm up at night
i think about my life and
how it would affect me in the future
when i'm up at night
i pray to my god
and ask him for forgiveness
and tell him thanks for blessing me with another day
i also ask him to help make my life better in the future
when i'm up at night
i think about my family
and how much stress i put them through
when i'm up at night
i think about the cycle of crime and doing time
and how much love and care i get from my family
when i'm up at night
i think about how i'm gonna change my past
and help make my future better
so when you're up at night
what do you think about

-Jc, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You can't change what happened in the past, but you can change the meaning of the past by seeing the choices you made as mistakes that hurt your family and yourself. Then you can change how you think and act in the present, which day by day, will change your future for the better — but the biggest change has to be in your own heart and mind. And it sounds like it's already started, even while you're still at Camp doing time. Your weekend passes will be tests to see if your change of heart and mind is real and lasting.

Up At Night Thinking 'Bout Home and Family

What keeps you up at night is that I am in a Alameda County Juvenile Hall away from my mom. I miss her so much because she is like my best friend! She always supports me and gives my somewhere to live.

Everyday I sit in cell thinking about my dad, my mom and my lil' brother, and I wish I was at my house, eating with my family! But instead I am eating with other people I don't even know. Everyday I pray to God that my mom, my dad and my brothers won't die while I am locked up in here.

-Martin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a loving and caring family that you miss a lot! Use that pain as a motivation to maintain good decision-making on the outs, so you never have to be here again. Even if getting locked up "wasn't your fault" — look at what decisions you made that sort of set you up to take this fall.

RIP Paco

This dying thing is not good.

You lose people that are very close to you and you didn't want that to happen to them. You think nothing's going to happen, you was just with the person like a few days ago, and then your phone rings, you look in the papers and they say they are dead.

Like my cousin Paco, we was with each other all the time, even though I'm not in his crew. I was just wit' my family. One morning his brother Tajee called my phone and said Paco was dead.

I was really mad, I felt like just going on a mission because my cousin died. You going to have to get over it some day. I went to his house and his family was mad at his gang, and they said it was they fault he died, but it was not over the gang stuff, it was just that he was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

His mom didn't like him being in a gang. She used to take money that he made when he was on the block and he didn't like that so he used to get mad, but she was I guess protecting him from the gangs. But they are not a gang -- they are a family, and I know this because my brother made it up and ll he is about is getting his money. And about nothing else.

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We are so sorry about Paco dying, and we understand that he was in the wrong place at the right time... but you know what, being in a gang is a part of a whole lifestyle that is more like a deathstyle. Sure, there is love there, and family loyalty a lot of the time, but it also means a) always being on the run b) always being on the lookout for police and enemies, always caught up in a cycle of revenge and "missions" as you call them, that just add to the death toll. We agree with the first part of this moving piece, where you say: "This dying thing is not good." And now we ask you — how can we work together to stop the dying, and mostly stop the killing?

What Keeps Me Up At Night

What keeps me up at night is thinking about my mom and my dad and crying at night because of what happened in my family. They left me at home alone and I just be thinking and crying all night that's what keep me up at night.

I've never lost my mind. I think first and then I do what I got to do that's why I never lost my mind. I will always think first and then I do what ever thing I got to do, ya feel me?

I wonder if I would ever get to see my uncle and my lil' sis again I really miss them. I cry when I think about them. My uncle got shot numerous times, and my lil' sis in Mexico when she got bitten by a scorpion when she was two years old. I always be wondering if I'll get to see them again.

-Mico, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad you can cry. Some people's pain is so buried they can't even cry. Thank you for sharing your family's story with The Beat. We hope you're never left home alone like that ever again.

Cherish Life

I stayed up at night because gunshots and police sirens making rapid noise in my community. I have nightmares because I've done bad things in my life and my conscience messes with me. I'm looking both ways. I don't wanna get smacked or die, so I try to make it in this life. But it's hard to make it in this life because people want ta take ma head off. I try to work with society rules, but maintaining is hard. Life is precious, so I wanna cherish it.

-Dada B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Yes, it is hard to try to live within the law and still have enough to eat and clothes to wear. But if you look around where you are, you will agree that it's also hard to live outside the law because this is the price you pay. What are you doing right now to prepare yourself for the kind of life that you want to live? Are you studying? Reading? Looking to finish school? Thinking about how to make a little money the legit. way to avoid having to come back here, or worse? We hope so.

The Day I Thought My Life Might End

One night I was wit' my lil' ninja, and for about thirty min's we was looking for a car to steal. After we found a car, for about ten min's we went looking for a party. Then we heard loud music, so we parked the car — and they let us in the party.

At the party I smoked like four blunts! So I was hella high and doing whatever I wanted to do.

Like twenty min's later, this ninja walked in talking hella stuff, and he pushed me. So I pushed him back, and we started arguing. Then he told me to come outside. I went outside, and I seen him pull something out his back pocket but I couldn't tell what it was because I was high. Then I seen him pointing a gun at me from across the lot. I pulled out a thirty-eight, but he already started bus'in' at me wit' a twenty-two.

So I started running, and I got shot in my leg! I fell and didn't know what to do until I saw my little ninja helping me up. He put me in a car and we drove to my aunt's house where she took care of me. But for a min' I thought I was going to die! — So that's my life.

-Lil' Ta-Ta, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nah, like you say, that was almost the death of you — life is something else. You need to connect the dots here to see clearly your responsibility in what almost happened to you. We're not defending the shooter, but we're asking you to stop pointing at him long enough to take a look at the part you played — how you set yourself up for trouble! You feel? And when your high like that, it's not that you do whatever you want, it's more like you can't even remember the things you really want — like home, family, a future, not risking your life over nothing. So don't confuse your life with that so-called life style that nearly got you killed. It was a wake up call!

My sis, RIP

First I want to say RIP to my sis that ain't here no more,
so now allow me to say, what it do Beat! This yo' boy
G-Love.

Y'all seen my name in The Beat as G-Money but it's now known as G-Love. But I want to take the time out to say what's up sis!? I miss you so much. I just can't stop thinking about you. You be in my heart all the time 'cause you're my baby sis and can't nobody change that sis 'cause I love you. So tell me how it is up there, sis. I hope you by God's side all the time sis. Well I got to go now, sis, well I'll talk to you soon sis.

I love you sis. RIP Jamie for life.

-G-Love

From The Beat: How has your family changed since you loss your sister? We hope she has become your guardian angel, always by your side whispering good thoughts in your ear.

Day and Night

day then night i think of you
remembering these
hugs and wishes from god above
sending angels down to comfort me
no more sorrow, no more pain
but yet they haven't came
and as i sit between
these four white walls
you is who i think of day then night
and the sun rises

-Tank, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What an incredibly beautiful little poem, that reaches first for spiritual solace in a time of dreadful loss, only to hit a wall of truth: too much sorrow, too much pain, thinking of the one you lost whom you will never see on earth again. And then, on that sleepless, dreamless, hopeless night thought in your cell — the sun rises (on another day of you alone in living hell).

Sweet Danielle

When I was younger and I came to jail, I met The Beat Within. And the first person from The Beat I met, was Danielle. Well, when she told me that she's leaving The Beat for Washington D.C. — my heart was shattered!

But she's grown. And the time she's spent giving me books and broadening my mind, I will always remember — and I wish the best for her, as my father once said. Also, I hope to see her again someday to thank her. One love.

-Lil' Washington, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Most of the people who give of their time and their lives to the writers and readers of The Beat, are just getting started in their grown-up lives. They grieve, too, when their goals and ambitions in life tell them it's time to leave The Beat and leave youngsters for whom they have come to care deeply, just like you. Cherish what Danielle gave you, and we're sure she'll cherish what you gave her, too. Best of the best to the both of you! One love.

I'm Missing Life

You know why? Because I'm always going out to the club, popping pills, or going go to my homie's house drinking and getting high until I'm fully loaded. I love bein' a OG in the Bay, but now I'm here in juvy!

I lost my life — my reality, my family, and my homies. I have to move on with this ghetto life. I miss my family so much that I want to have a nervous breakdown! Every time I see my mom, it makes me feel blessed.

I miss my clubbing, my homies and my family, 'cause without them I have no life in me, only Newports — and drugs and alcohol that only overcome my reality.

In November I will get my treatment — and I will graduate out of it! I will no let no one put me down. That what keeps me up all night, 'cause I'm praying to leave this place.

-Wayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Not everything you miss is good for you. If chilling with your homies means feeding your addiction to drugs (alcohol is a drug, too), then they're no good for you. The only way your treatment program will work is if you do it for real. Then you'll know who your friends really are, 'cause a friend will admit you have a problem with pills, smoking and drinking (we don't mean tobacco or soda pop, 'cause you can deal with that later if you want; we mean mind- and mood-altering substances like marijuana and alcohol), and a friend will support you in trying to get your mind clear and your life right. It's time to stop hiding from reality, face your problems and overcome them.

Regrets, Grief, Hopes and Desires

What keeps me up at night is just thinking about the fact that I am in the Hall, and asking myself: Why did it have to be me?

Sometimes I wonder what would I be doing right now if I was in the town, how much fun I would be having with all my friends. I'm always regretting the night I got caught by the police. I could've got away, but I didn't want to leave my Mexican patna.

Every night I stay up and think about my little brother and the fact that he is really gone. He had a good future ahead of him. He was going to be a better version of me if he had grown up. I'm not trying to sound like a sucker or nothing, but I cry sometimes when I think about that.

Another reason I'm up at night thinking, is realizing all the beef I'm still going to have after I get out! So this whole time I'm in here, I be thinking about staying on point when I get out, 'cause I can't be slipping when I get out and end up getting blapped at!

Plus the beds in here be hella uncomfortable, and it be real hot in my room, too. And I think about how if I was out, all the girls I would be with and all the stuff I would do with them, and it's hard in here 'cause you just be around dudes all day. I'm used to being the center of attention with all the girls in the town.

-Marcus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds as if you regret not running out on your partner the night you got arrested, but your regrets should begin way before it even got to that point. If you hadn't been out there doing what you were doing, there'd be nothing to regret. You feel? If you just plan to be slicker when you're out there, you'll be back (if you're fortunate enough not to go to a hospital or cemetery first). We're not hating on you, but you can't keep doing what you do and expect things to be cool. Maybe when you were younger there were no serious consequences to your actions, but from now, the consequences just keep getting more and more serious. Quit the mob and get a lil' part-time job for your cash, if you want your freedom to last.

Sleepless Nights

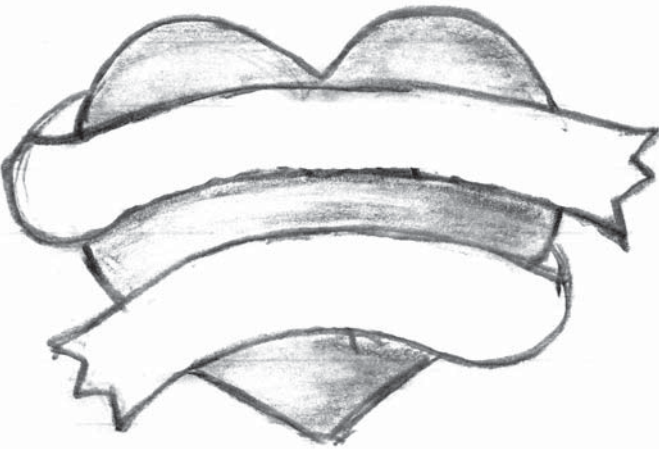
For the past few years I have had trouble sleeping. It's usually bad dreams.

Another reason for me staying awake, or not being able to sleep, is probably the stress I feel from all the other problems on my mind that I think about all the time.

I don't talk to nobody about the dreams. I just deal with them. The same goes for my problems that are nobody's but mine.

-White Ant, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you want to write about bad dreams, have us read it and not print it, or likewise, about your personal problems — it really can help to write about whatever's stressing you out. And it helps to write when you know somebody else will read it (but no one who's going ever to use it against you in any way).



Giving Up (For Claire)

i used to make the light shine for you
the sun has left my sky
velvet walls surround my sorrow
i've sacrificed my pride
giving up on me
you're giving up on me

i've laid myself to sleep tonight
i know you've played out everything in your mind
and now you throw it all away
a shattered memory, that you would stay
through thick and thin with me
giving up on, giving up on me
you're giving up on me
you've laid yourself to sleep tonight
i know you've played out everything in your mind
and shattered memory, that you would stay
through thick and thin with me
i never said this wouldn't hurt
i never said i'd give it back
you gave up everything, i won't
be good enough for you
i know you'll never change
and now you throw it all away
a shattered memory, throw it all away
giving up on me

-P, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your repeated lines echo like the return of a musical theme but also emphasize the obsessive quality of the lingering pain of a broken relationship. It seems as if she's rejecting you, until near the end where you stack up lines that sound pretty hostile: "i never said this wouldn't hurt / i never said i'd give it back" — until "... i won't / be good enough for you" sounds more like a threat than a lamentation. Finally, it makes us wonder if you're giving up on yourself. Don't! Don't let this pain turn you negative and self-destructive. Be good enough, strive!

RIP Ron Ezz Always Loved

i remember back in the days when you was hella shkrymee
before we called you ronezz we called you lil' ronnie
turf football from harmon up to prince street
and when you dropped the ball and all my ninjas fell to
defeat

they called you weak but you wasn't, you strong-minded,
strong-hearted they use to think you was a mark cousin
you use to show ninjas that you wasn't a punk
talk trash and ninjas catchin' a lump
and ninjas didn't want to hoo'ride
you use' to talk about a ninja' momma so bad they wanna
fight

but it's all right

'cause we still go' see you that night
another day in the saga of life
from a lil' skinny ninja wit' metal braces
man i wish me and ronnie could trade places
oftentimes you could find us at the same places
H and R wit' the cars at the functions
when we blowin' trees knockin' breezies while stuntin'
actin' like everything wasn't nothin'

now yo' life is somethin'

that shhh just wasn't nothin'

they took yo' life for nothin'

that shhh made me mad

but right now i'm dwellin' on the good times we had
drinking purple bottles and blowing purple weed
reminiscin' on the beezie that i knocked that you snatched
when i'd think about it, that shhh just made me laugh
i wasn't trippin' on my ninjas that a play off patch
my life is in the past so i see you in my present
every time i'm sippin' on some drank i say yo' blessin'
from the incident of ron ezz i learned a lesson
stay up in yo' circle, never step up out yo' section
'cause ninjas stay testin' when a ninja doing good
it's a cold game but part of growing up in 'hood

-Larry, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It may be a part of growing up in the 'hood, but you're old enough now to have outgrown a game that turns on you whenever you start doing "good". The lesson is to rise from the street altogether — get yourself a job so you can do better than die young with your name on a tee or come in and out of jail till you get stuck in the penitentiary. Learn from the death of Ron Ezz, that you can't just do whatever you please, 'cause you're no longer a lil' hood rat running the streets. You're a young man, and you need a mature, life plan.

RIP My Ninja Reese

This person is not special to me, but he is a close friend. I used to spend all-nights on the spot with brah, kick it with brah, go dumb with brah, everything!

Brah stayed putting me up on game, helping me when I was doin' bad, and basically showin' me love along with the rest of the ninjas we be with. But since I was the youngest he stayed on my case — always tellin' me to get my money, go to school, do the right thang. Even though we was doin' some illegal things, he still told me to do right.

I'm doin' bad right now, but I'm going to get back on my feet in no time — it's a money thang. Reese gone but never forgotten.

-Lil' Freddy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We don't think there is anything or anyone more special than a close friend, so we know the death of your friend Reese must have hit you especially hard. It sounds like he tried his best to be a good "big brother" to you. Unfortunately, he didn't know that you can't keep one foot in the street and one foot in the classroom, 'cause that "get money by any means necessary" foot will drag you down to an early grave or shackle you behind walls for years in a cage. Yes, we all need to get money, but do-right is not "a money thang" — it's everything, including how you get your money. We wish we could tell you there was an easier way, but we can tell you crime doesn't pay in the end, when you tally up your losses by years in the pen' and deaths of close friends. Get your money the right way, or do without a few days, but get your education anyway — and there'll come a day you'll have a cool job with good pay.

Where I'm Gon' End Up?

sometimes i wonder
where i'm gon' end up
i be tryin' a do good
but it always be something
where i make a wrong decision
on how to handle a situation
i try to have self-control
but sometimes i can't control myself
or sometimes i get put in positions
where i feel forced to do the wrong thing
or what i feel is right at the time
i want to end up with a wifey
a couple of kids (just two)
and a house that i own
but the life i like to live
and the way i feel i have to deal
with certain situations
i might have a different ending
i just hope
everything work out for me
but if it don't
it was probably meant to be

-Bam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nah, you are meant to succeed! If you fall short, it's not because it was meant to be but because you broke weak. What do we mean? You can no longer afford to tell yourself that circumstances forced you to do anything — even if you say it seemed right to you at the time. You've got to get your rights and wrongs back in a straight line, and stick to it, no matter what it takes. You've got to do it right, no matter what the breaks. Obviously, it's not working out the way you want in any case. So why not take a strong stand and stop breaking weak, man? Set your do-right plan, then don't quit, no matter what. If circumstances seem to be forcing you, just play that old wild card: "I don't give a f—!" Don't surrender your freedom like a pup. Stand up like a big dog and do right, no matter what!

Lost Control

I think that to go crazy means to totally lose your mind. The reason that I got locked up was because I went crazy to the point where I did not know what was going on. I mean I understood everything and knew that I was doing bad, but I could not control my actions. I think I need help but I don't want it. If I get it then I will not be free, and all I wanna do is be free. I know if I will be free I will change my life around, but till then I have to wait.

-Lionfishy B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You have a real dilemma on your hands. On the one hand, you know you need help, and that without it, you could again lose control of yourself and end up back here, or in a much worse situation. On the other hand, you're afraid that if you seek the help you need, you won't be free. But freedom is more than just the absence of walls and bars. Freedom is also a state of mind. So we want to encourage you as strongly as we can to get that help you know you need because it promises you a future in which you are able to guarantee your own freedom. It takes courage to ask for help. How courageous are you?

Sometimes I Wonder

Sometimes I wonder how would the world be without a God. If there were no God would there be a world? Would there even be humans, planets, would there even be a universe? God changed a lot of stuff that people wouldn't even think of.

-William, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a deep question, —when we really stop to think about life, and the universe, and the great questions, how everything about the world is a great mystery. Do you ever wonder how much of the universe God controls? Like does He control our actions, or do we? Does He control our future, or do we? Is He even a He, or is He a She? Tell us more about how you look at these things — a sort of a Gospel According to William.

Out Here On These Streets (A Movie Script)

[Scene One: location — Oakland, California. Lil' Jay stands on the corner in front of the pink store, selling crack. Lil' Jay, a short, skinny, light-skinned kid with long dreadlocks, never leaves the house without his twenty-two revolver, which the movie screen in x-ray vision shows him briefly touching with his right hand in his deep pants pocket. Then the camera pulls back to show an OG crackhead/burn-out walking up to Lil' Jay.]

LJ: What you need, OG?

OG: I got six for you, youngster.

LJ: OG, it's bad!

OG: Take this six, youngster, and I'll give you your four later.

LJ: OG, you making the spot hot! Come back when you got ten.

[The crackhead leaves and Lil' Jay stays posted on the spot. Lil' Jay's potna Ron-Ron, from the turf, comes outside with his bundle and starts getting off rocks.]

RR: What's up, brah-brah!

LJ: Shhh, posted. Tryin' a get some rocks off.

RR: My lil' Arab potna down the street got a forty-five he tryin' a sell me for five hundred dollars.

LJ: Let's go get that, brah. Drop half of it and I'll drop the other two hundred and fifty. Shhh man, we need that! You know ninjas funkung turf out here on these streets.

[Ron-Ron calls Muhammad who says he got it and to come by now to buy the gun.]

[Scene Two: location — Oakland, California, some twenty-odd blocks away in front of another corner store, Lil' Jay and Ron-Ron drive up. Muhammad gets in the car, and they do business.]

M: How much you got?

RR: Ninja, you said five hundred dollars, you stupid-azz Ay-rab!

LJ: That's all you got, is that forty-five?

M: I got a AK for nine hundred dollars — and don't disrespect my culture you mutha...!

LJ: I'm gon' mess wit' that AK, but first I got to get some loot. But let me just cash out for that forty-five, and I'm gon' get back at you in a few days on that AK.

[Muhammad sells Lil' Jay and Ron-Ron the gun, and they head back to their spot. On the way though, the two went around the corner to another spot to get some grapes. After their purchase, they went to a smoke shop to get some Swishers.]

RR: Brah, run in and get a box of Swishers.

LJ: Fo' sure.

[Lil' Jay gets out the Box Chevy, enters the smokeshop, and walks up to the counter behind which stands the shop's owner by the cash register.]

O: Can I help you?

LJ: Yeah, let me get Sw— (BOOM! BOOM!) [Two shots are fired. To be continued.]

-Lil' Jb, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You give us a fair portrait of the street through several little snippets of action that say a lot in a few words — how the so-called OG answers to the authority of the young Jay because of the economic relationship of crackhead to dealer (undermining the "normal" social hierarchy of respect owed an elder by a youngster); and how easy it is to buy a gun, even an automatic Russian assault rifle in the streets of Oakland if you know where to go and whom to see; how marijuana ("grapes") and crack cocaine ("rocks") are not (usually) sold at the same spot; and, lastly, how suddenly what seems like the mundane flow of events in the street life can suddenly be interrupted by violence and the sound of gun shots. But now, we did tell you that if this story line is to be continued, there must be a voice or point of view that is wiser than that of the participants in this young thug story of dope dealing, guns, and violence — even if it's one of the participants looking back on the past with a sadder but wiser perspective. Lastly, it might be a good idea to change the characters names, otherwise it may read like a criminal confession rather than a fictional movie script. You feel? That said, is this the Ron-Ron who was killed not too long ago in a shoot-out with the County Sheriffs? Perhaps a brief introduction that frames the film's narrative and establishes either its fictive nature or its point might be helpful. In any event, thanks for the effort. We're sure that you have our readers on the edge of their seats waiting to read your next installment, which apparently won't be for at least two to three weeks. [Also in your scenic descriptions, for example, when you wrote "good, good grapes" — you could have these words overheard, as it were, in the distance as the deal goes down, perhaps as one of the characters waits in the car listening to a song on the radio ... what song? Remember that which lyrics get heard can contribute to the film's meaning or comment on the action at any given point.]

RIP Doobie

Rest In Peace to Doobie. My brah was solid as hell and had the heart of a OG. People respected his mind, no matter what the situation.

I remember when I first started coming outside — well, I should say, outside my hood. Doobie wanted me to be from his block instead of where I was originally from. I told Doobie I wasn't go' claim his block, but since he thought I was a hitter, I still walked around with him that day, banging his block, just because I knew he would respect that at the moment.

Doobie for life — gone, never forgotten!

-Lil' Walt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've told us just how close you felt to Doobie (RIP), at least that one day you banged Gaskill with him. We, too, respected Doobie's mind, but we tried to change it enough to keep him alive. We feel the same way about you. You need to be the OG who graduated from the street, got a j-o-b and got to live his life complete. 'Cause Doobie never lived to be an OG, see?

My Mom Don't Know

i feel the world is over for me — but it's not
i feel that my mom don't care about me
and i'm alone in life without her

i can talk about how i feel about my mom
because i want to let others know how you may be by yourself
and it's not fair to you

on october thirteenth, friday, i had court
and i was happy when i left to go to court
but when i got there in the courthouse

i was feeling frustrated and not loved anymore
when i walked in the courthouse i was talking to my attorney
and he told me my mom wasn't coming to my court date
i knew i was alone then as my thinking i was alone

i told myself "just cry and let it out now
'cause you're going through the life of being alone"
then we walked in the courthouse and the judge

mentioned that my mom wouldn't make it
so i cried in the palms of my hands
feeling alone and not cared for

by someone whom i really cared for and loved
me — stella — i make mistakes

and i will always learn from my mistakes
'cause you can hurt the people whom you love the most
or hurt someone who loves you the most
now i feel down everyday, i cry everyday

and everyday i pray now so he can make my mom come back in my life
i even cry myself to sleep and i wake up with a good or bad attitude
but i notice when i cry i let the pain out and i kinda feel better
but it doesn't help 'cause i'm still by myself

until my mom comes back to me

or i go back to her

my mom don't know i'm hurting

but when i go to my group i'm going to call her and tell her how i feel
and maybe she will tell me something that i really think will heal my heart

-Stella, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We don't know how the communication between your mother and yourself was so decisively interrupted that you had to learn from your attorney that your mother would not be at your court date. It must have felt excruciatingly painful, but in truth it doesn't mean that you are not loved by her or even that you are alone, though to be sure, you must have felt terribly alone at the moment when the judge repeated the news that your mother would not be there at court. We can only guess as to why she wasn't there, but we are certain that it does not mean you are unloved. Perhaps all of this has been just too painful for her to bear. Perhaps she felt that you would ask her to take you home, and she feels that she cannot control you nor can you control yourself. Perhaps she hopes that you learn some self-discipline and self-control in a group home setting where you may show more respect for a stranger's authority than you do your mother's. Honestly, we don't know why she wasn't there, but we don't believe that you are no longer loved. On the other hand, it may be that you need to prove you are trustworthy regardless of how much your mother loves you, and often this process takes longer than you would like — but in the end it is more than worth the effort! In short, what you need to focus on is consistently making good decisions and handling yourself responsibly, and your mother's love will no doubt be there waiting as you successfully complete your program and prove your patience.

Mi Amor Perdido

Hey! Que tranza, Beat? Well, simon, it's Spooky from Hayward. Well, I'm'a write a little something para un vato who has me wondering if he still loves me like he said he would.

sometimes i wonder when i'm'a die
i wonder if you will be by my side
now you're just on my mind
every day and every night

i just wonder

did you love me, did you lie to me
why if you were going to cheat on me
why didn't you just leave me

why did you stay with me
you said you loved me
but you never meant it
you just faked it

you never meant one bit

i made a promise and i know i'm'a keep

i told you i loved you and i wasn't going to leave you

so till the day i die, i'm'a love you
me and you on my mind

every day till the end of time

-Spooky, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Some of us already old and gray, still remember the love of our teenage days. You're so right that true love never dies, but sometimes relationships do, no matter how hard you try. We don't know this vato, so we can't tell you what's up. But if you know he's with someone else, and you wonder why he didn't just break up with you if that's what he wanted to do — well, you pretty much say it all in your poem. You're probably better off leaving him alone to do as he pleases, even if the love in your heart never ceases.

Think Before You Act

What's up with it Beat, This your boy Lil Man Man, just trying to keep my head up and do my time, and trying to get up out of here, so I could start my life over. I want to try to go to school and get my life together, so I could be there for my family and cousin and so I could see them grow up to be something when they get older. I don't want them to be like me or nobody else. So for all and everybody out there, just change your life around when you got the time. Go to school, and when you get out don't go back to what you was doing before you got locked up, before you gonna to do something you know you going to come back to jail.

Just keep this in mind. Think before you act. RIP Larry

-Lil' Man Man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Each week, you write a strong note of warning to all the young people who read The Beat, either inside or on the outs, and advise them not to make the mistakes you've made. It's good advice, and we bet someone once gave you that advice too when you were on the streets — maybe someone at the group home, maybe someone in your family... and yet you found it difficult to follow that advice. Maybe you could share with our readers what i was that kept you from listening to other people... was it greed? Was it not having someone keeping an eye on you? Was it that the streets were too fun and school was too hard? Was it because you had no one to take care of you? Was it because you had no choice? What was it that tempted YOU from this path you continue to urge others to follow. We'd love to hear more of your life story, because the truth is that if you really want to be heard by other people in your position, the best thing you can do is tell them more about what you've been through, so they can see where you're coming from.

Love Me For Who I Am

when i last your golden voice heard
i wanted to make you into moisture
i love you so much
you make me want to bust
i cant take it no more
take me away from all this pain
i think i'm going insane
i want to go outside or else i'll die
without you michael i feel sad
not seeing you makes me mad
love me don't hate me
take me for who i am
and don't break me into pieces baby
i know you care
you loving to see me in my underwear
me next to you is all i want
us together in wonderland
i don't know why i do the things i do
maybe it's because i'm so in love with you

-Angelina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's a playful, sweet love poem, to help you through another night away from home. It's almost like a dream come true, writing a poem that makes him dream of you.

For Ms. Perales

Thank you Ms. P, for supporting the level three's. I'm happy that somebody thinks about us. Thank you for not treating us like the criminals we are. Thank you for our breaks. And we love you because your not fake. Thank you for everythang!

-Aleisha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad to see Ms. P get some well-earned praise, 'cause some counselors go way out of their way to help a young incarcerated juvenile detainee feel halfway okay — and she's one of those who is way past coo'!

Thinking About Family, Friends and Change

I been thinking about my family while I been and here, and about all my friends, you know — I really miss them all!

And when I get out, I am going to change myself around and make better choices with myself. You feel me? And when I get out, I am going to start back going to school, like some of my friends should too — and I am going to slow down on smoking weed, because that was slowing down my life and all of my plans that I wanted to do in the past.

-Damarie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Right on, right on! Stay strong. But now, beware of the influence of friends, because while you say they, too, should go to school, if you hang with them, it may be that they get you to act a fool — hit that weed, ditch school and go back to the same old thinking it's cool. Change your playgrounds, playmates, playthings.

Brother

What's up wit' it boy
 i know it's been a while since i tried to talk to you
 but let me tell you what's been going on
 lately it's been action jumpin' off
 and truth be told, ya young brother tired
 my son two now and i got a lil' girl on the way
 i can finally say that i'm happy now
 but my B-M dog me lately, she been a trip
 and mommy, i don't really sweat her
 'cause i understand now that in life
 you can really be under pressure
 our sister, she entering another semester
 god done blessed her
 as fo' the team, some gone off the scene
 my ace got sixteen years in the pen'
 lil' bra got twenty-five wit' a 'L'
 so it's like i'm the only one now
 can't let the game break me down
 and the feds, they stopped coming around
 but the sirens keep making sounds
 like them bangas, i keep flipping out
 they say it's stress but i know it's anger
 i'm missing everybody but it's cutting deeper
 because i gotta move on into this life of wrong
 hustling, bubbling, tryin to hold on
 and what else i wanna say to you
 i wouldn't dare put in this paper
 so i'll holla at you later

-Young Clyde, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Here you are talking about how your crew is disappearing from the street scene — sixteen years, and twenty-five with an L, to serve in the pen — and you write like you plan to go back to that same life again. You don't even mention you're locked up in max' facing serious charges. If we didn't know better, we'd think you were still out in the street livin' large when instead you're locked down wearing pants without pockets with stress and anger exploding in your head like rockets. In addition to whatever stress (which manifests for most as anger, yes) you feel from the daily routine of living with no freedom in here, you've got the stress of trying to deny that everything you believed in and lived for was a lie that led you to a room with a ceiling, a floor, four walls and no door. Well, not everything, 'cause now you have two children out there you still adore but whom you can do nothing for — and they're always the game's most tragic victims, even sadder than fathers locked in the system or buried at a young age. For the children grow up in the streets with no father assist them. Was that you as a child, too? Yet you refuse to see through the "game" that did this to you.

Lost It

i lost my mind one time when
i was on the outs and i couldn't find my sister
you could say she ran away
and nobody knew where she was
my mom tried to calm me down
but couldn't until i found my sister
i stayed out for days at a time
then she finally popped up at home
and my mom called me and told me to come home
it made me happy that she was home
but i was still very mad with her

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Because you knew how much trouble she could get into and what serious danger she could be facing, you were losing your mind with anxiety and worry. We wonder if you felt as much concern for yourself and your own well-being, would you keep on living the same way, having seen what you've seen, and knowing what you know today? **Change!** For you own, and for your mom's and sister's sakes.

I've Lost It

sometimes i wonder what i'm wondering sometimes
sometimes i wonder — was my crime worth my time
i wonder if my life is just a theme
sometimes i hope my life was just a dream
sometimes people wonder only about me
i say sometimes — don't wonder, just come see
and i wonder if they wonder sometimes if i'll be free
 have you ever lost your mind
 has your mind ever lost you
 it seems as though i have
 and trust me, it's my better half
 my better half was my thoughts
 my dreams, my memories — i've lost it
to the beat within — i respect
what you do for my young black brothers
it seems as if we do nothing for each other

-Woodhouse, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you've lost your dreams and even your memories no longer seem to mean what they did in the past, it also seems that you're ready to face the present facts. Your poem offers your young black brothers a window onto reality, so they can avoid volunteering to be victims of the system's routine brutality or chalked up as the next young, street fatality. In any case, your poem is eloquent in many ways.

Sick Of This Place

You are sick of this place
 Sick of being told what to do
 Sick of being told what to eat
 You are sick of not being yourself
 Sick of sleeping early
 Sick of being told how to dress and what to wear
 You are sick of this place
 Sick of the staff telling you who to write and when to write
 You are sick of this place
 So if you are so sick of this place be good and stop coming here
 And then you won't be sick of this place
 (Dedicated to my lil' brother)

-Aaronessa, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Aaronessa, it sounds like you could be writing this letter to yourself as well. When you are saying this to your brother and he sees that you are in here too, isn't that sending him mixed messages? Actions speak louder than words so try to show him how to succeed and make positive choices.

Sometimes I Wonder

What it would be like if my pops was around, like here to guide me in the right direction, like I am pretty good at football, but if I had a father to maybe get me into Pop Warner when I was younger and maybe I would be on my way to college, instead of graduating from high school in juvie, I would have a drive in my life and something to do with my time.

-Mic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You aren't the first or the last person to grow up without a dad. We feel your pain and can understand where you're coming from but we're more focused on where you're going. What happens when you're moving forward but looking behind you? You fall! Keep your eyes on the road ahead. This thing we call life is far from over and you've got a long way to go. So focus up!

2Pac

What's up wit' it, Beat? It's ya ninja, Young Henny, and I'm a 16-year-old from Marin City born and raised. And I'm a tell you some facts that I know about 2Pac.

- 1) He's a turf hopper.
- 2) The Marin City aka the Jungle made him.
- 3) I don't like him.
- 4) Show no love to him.
- 5) He killed my young ninja, Cyee. He two years older than me, but he still my young ninja. RIP, Cyee.
- 6) He's my cousin's god dad, but he's still not a factor to me.
- 7) My uncle and some more OGs ran 2Pac outta Marin City for that murder.
- 8) I was there when I was five and watched my ninja die.
- 9) I have no respect for Pac. If his music was in my ears, I would geese on the person who's playing it.
- 10) 2Pac got ran out the Jungle, and that's when he went to Oakland.
- 11) He don't show enough love to the Jungle in his songs, like he should.
- 12) And the former Jungle/Marin City rap group 51/50 was the people who got Pac signed to Digital Underground, and that was around the same time he got ran out.
- 13) Pac's a mark and to all his fans, I don't care what you think. Respect it or check it. Yo' boy a real ninja.

-Young Henny, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sorry for your loss! When things like this happens, we're always look for someone to blame. Is this what you're doing? A lot of you from Marin City have written or said in our Beat discussions that you had beef with 2Pac, but this is the first time any of you have written something specific about why you aren't feeling him. How can you prove Pac did what you're saying he did? Do you have evidence?

Seen A Lotta People Go

Rest In Peace To: Scharod, Ray-Ray, Wayne...

I ain't from down the way, I'm from Brooklyn, New York, but I know these dudes, too. Actually, since I was younger at Everett Middle School and Booker T. Washington. Yea, and to all the other fallen soldiers, all casualties in the battle of the streets.

I had a list of dudes that I lost over the years, but they're, of course, from New York! So what do y'all care? But, also, to the older guys from the projects. Yea, I lived there. They was like family.

Damn, lettin' it all out, huh? Last summer I lost my baby mother and son in a car crash! Yea, I wrote about it in The Beat, but I didn't sign my name. I guess I'm a more open person, now, huh? So, I'm through. That Brooklyn born bathing ape, sayin'...Rest in Peace!

-Biggie Littles LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You have our hearts for the deaths of your baby mother and son, Biggie Littles. We never knew until now that you've been through such a tragedy. Thank you for your confidence in yourself and sharing with The Beat.

These Ninjas Were Like Family To Me

This right here is an RIP to all of my dead potnas, these ninjas were like family to me.

First of all, RIP to my ninja Willie, I can remember when we was little and we was runnin' around the turf in diapers. We all miss you bruh.

Then I wanna say RIP to my bruh, Paco. Damn, I never thought life would end up doing you like that. I miss you ninja. My bruh buh Tone, damn, it's hard to believe you gone, it seems like just yesterday that we were on hella bottles drunk as shhh.

Last but definitely not least, my ninja Ron Ron, it seems like yesterday we was in the othere unit fightin' our cases, talkin' about how we were never gon' come back, or every time I ride down the avenue I see you coming out of the store with swishers and bottles.

We all miss y'all and want y'all to know that y'all might be gone but you damn well ain't forgotten.

-Young Weezy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: All this tragic loss, these senseless deaths. When a person is killed, it's not just they who suffer, it's their loved ones and of course it's their future which is snuffed out like a candle. You have already lost three people you cared about, and now we ask you: How can we come together to stop the violence.

Keepin' Me Up

what keeps me up
 is being in here thinking
 about how i'm doing in life
 and how my family is doing on the outs
 most of all i stay up 'cause i can't sleep
 and i just be thinking of everybody i know
 and how they be out on the outs doing what they want to
 i can't sleep because i know i made a mistake
 and it's nothing i can do to get out of here
 most of all i think about my mom
 and how i love her but i can't show it because i'm in here
 and that don't show love 'cause it hurts her a lot
 and that's why i can't sleep at night

-Lamonte, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There's no getting around that it's a hard time in your life. It's good that you recognize the mistake you made, so that when you get that second chance at freedom, you won't continue down the same road you were traveling — 'cause that's where the mistake begins even if this is where it ends (or in an early grave). But you need to know some of your friends out there who think they're doing "what they want" are heading down that same road you took to get here. The key is learning to want what's truly good for you, your loved ones, and your future life with them (and as you see, it's not just a question of money, 'cause without freedom, money's just another statistic).

What Keeps Me Up At Night

What keeps me up at night is when I think about my family.

What keeps me up at night is when I hear bad news
What keeps me up at night i when I think about my life,
like when am I going to breathe my last breathe, because
I done been through so much, and done so much dirt.
What keeps me up at night, is when I get tired of getting
letters from my family and my female talking about how
much they miss me and how fun it is in on the outs.
What keeps me up at night is when my mom comes and
visits me and then she leaves. It hurts me to see her leave
without me, so I know it hurts her even more to leave her
baby son to be locked up behind a door.
That's what keeps me up at night.

-Young B, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem is like a blues, or a song – you have so many stresses on you at a young age. Maybe these thoughts weren't just sent to torment you but to point a path you can take, a path that might take you to a better place (and better sleep) than you are feeling now. Is that possible?

I Have a Dream

i have a dream
that one day i will be free
from camp
free with my mind
and what i say
free is just doing what men do
and that's love yourself
and love your own
love your family
free is to make money in a
positive way
not killing us black families
just to make a dime
but i still have a dream
that the world will be free
i have a dream

-Big B, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's a beautiful dream. Now what steps do you plan to take in order to make your dream come true for you!

I'm Done Wit' It

yep i'm done wit' it
i'm done wit' the hall
i'm sick of comin' here
i'm sick of county food
i'm done wit' all the tears
i'm done wit' all these different judges
i'm sick of county clothes
i'm sick of this life
i'm done wit' staff
i'm gonna change
there's many people
that don't believe me
but i'm not gonna let them get to me
these people that don't believe me
are the same people
that i don't need to be around

-Young Squeeks, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We'd think you saw through all the tricks and snares that keep bringing you back her, but then we saw the hand sign (claiming your turf) you drew at the bottom of this piece – and it makes us think you're still confused about what you'll need to do (and not do) to stay out and free. The G's you kick it wit' on your turf aren't really different than these detainees, just friendlier and more familiar – but they have the same mind set about the street game.

Now I'm Missing You

I know I messed up
getting caught up
doing what I did.
Now I'm missing you,
not a day goes by
that I'm not thinking about you.
I miss your cooking,
I miss how you used to give me advice.
I miss being in your arms.
I love you and miss you
always.
To my loving mother Leini.

-Big Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Beautiful and heartfelt ode to the love you feel your mother, Big Sam. We hope you felt some comfort in writing it.

I Wonder What . . .

sometimes i wonder what
going to happen to me
when i go to court
and also wonder if
i'm ever goin' to
get out of this place
and also wonder where
am i goin' after here
also wonder what
my family doin'
and how they doin'
and wonder what am i
goin' to do with my life
hopefully not be in places
like this –
all right beat
see y'all next time
— late

-TonicOne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wondering's a start, a beginning of the process of imagining a change in your life. 'Cause if you can't see it, how you ever going to be it? Still you need to do more than hope and pray – you've got to work to change the part you play with the decisions you make day to day if you really do want to quit coming back to places like this.

The Feeling Ain't Right

Man I've been up all night.
The feeling ain't right.
I put strap in my back, no time to fight
I got a call from the crew, they said come on through
There's a little trouble in the area
Now I can't roll too deep.
I had to take the back street,
I work better alone -- just me and my heat.
I got my nine on my side, and I'm ready to ride.
(RIP Tony the Real)
Gun drawn,
a loud noise
bullet in the air
fear everywhere
body dropping
(Also: RIP Peanut the real
RIP J-5 the real)

-Teric, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The thing about this moving (and disturbing) poem is that you know the inevitable tragic outcome of the lifestyle you describe – trouble in the area, nine on your side – this is the exact environment that led to the early and terrible deaths of people you cared for. Imagine for a second, if everyone put down their guns, then there'd be no more young people dying. Crazy isn't it? On the one hand, so simple. On the other hand, so complicated.

Rest In Peace

I just wanna say Rest in Peace to my boy Pancho who just died on July 10th, 2006.

Yeah he was like my big brother and he got shot by some people doin' a drive-by. What's really cold about that is they wasn't even on point 'cause they was tryin' to hit somebody else. Man I was hella mad, but couldn't do not a thang about it though.

The day after it happened, I was sittin' in my room thinkin' like man, that could have been me gettin' shot in the head that night. So like I said, Rest in Peace, bra'. Keep on watching me and I'm goin' 'keep doin' it like I was doin' it before. But what my boy was like, yeah you know he was a wild cat. He stay boin' bad on peope 24/7/365 though.

That ninja's dreads was dumb ass long, and he was just hella cool though. That was the reason he went so hard. He probably in heaven goin' eighteen dummy igh now.

-Xavier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We are sorry for the tragic loss of Pancho, your friend/family. So messed up that he was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Yet, his death hasn't made you think twice about your way of livin'. What will it take? Locked up? Death? Why are you so selfish to your family by living this reckless way?

Losing Sleep over Lost Loved Ones

One thing that keeps me up at night is my thoughts.
Most of the time it is my ninja Cell.

Since he's been gone, I can't stop thinkin' about him, and it interferes with my sleep. Just the thought that he is gone, and I always think about the last time I was with him and what would happen if I was with him and could have changed it. I miss you bra. RIP cell.

-Lil' Naud, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You will never lose the memory of Marcellus, and that's a good thing, because it also means you'll never lose your love for him, but eventually, one day, his memory will bring less pain than it does now.

What Keeps You Up At Night

What keeps me up at night — is stressing! I be stressing off my family, and most of all my girl, because she been with me through ups and downs. She is still with me right now, and that's why I love her. And that's why I be stressing, because that hurts me very much.

So that's what keeps me up at night. But to avoid that — is getting out and living a good life with my family and my girl, and having a good job so I can take care of my family. Peace out, Beat. This was yo' boy Lil' Sam. God bless everybody.

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: As hard as it is to feel separated from your loved ones, it's still better than being unloved and alone in here. You have all the motivation you need to do well, not only in here but also when you get out — to live that good life of honest work on the job with a loving family at home.

120 Dead, and Counting

What's up, Beat Within! This yo' boy, Travis. Look what's going on out there — it's 120 body-count in Oakland, man.

I go to bed in here wondering if I was going to be one of them people who is dead. In truth, I would ask God could He please kill me before I have to come here and do time for these peoples. But life going to get good one day.

-Travis, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You put a face and a name to the desperation that has young men out there praying to die rather than serve life. The threat of such punishment feeds rather than curbs the killing.

Interview With Travis

We gon' talk about have you ever lost your mind and the rest in peace issue all at once.

B: well what do you want to say that put these two topics together?

T: I want to say that sometimes we lose our mind and it seems like the grind ain't doin' the crime and we lost our mind.

B: Has that ever happened to you? Have you ever lost your mind?

T: I lost my mind when I went to jail and they locked me in that little room and the staff got at me crazy and I started kickin' on doors and beatin' windows cause I be out of my mind. And I really lost my mind when my mom died. RIP Lenzella Gotrey

B: How old were you when your mother died?

T: I was twelve years old.

B: How did it affect you as a twelve year old?

T: It affected me strongly had me losing my mind, wishing I was all alone, in a zone, all in the streets doing whatever.

B: is that what your mom would want you to be doing?

T: Nah, she'd want me to go to school and be a football player, providing for my brothers and sister, she thought I'd be the one to make it out

B: Now let's talk about what keeps you up at night.

T: the strength of my mom cause she was a strong lady. I always think about how Jesus Christ went through a lot and he kept his head up high just like Malcom X. they never put the head down low.

B: Do you wonder at night if you can still make it out the ghetto like your mother dreamed?

T: Sometimes I put a lot of hope in it, because I know I'm live my life like Christ and get right.

-Travis, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You don't have to be perfect as Christ to change your life, but you do have to quit the life of crime that has you locked up doing time. Maybe for a while after your mother first died when you could justify that down for whatever attitude as a symptom of your grief, but it's time for you to prove to yourself and the world that your mother's belief in you was true — you can still be the one to make it out the street scene and make your mother's hopes for you into something more than just another broken ghetto dream.

I really lost my mind when my mom died. RIP Lenzella Gotrey

It's Funny Because

what keeps me up at night
is my roommate snoring
hella loud
it's funny because
when i'm going through something
he start talking in his sleep
about stupid stuff
i throw books at him
and act like i'm 'sleep
it's funny
and the next thing you know
i fall to sleep.

-King, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When we read this one out loud, everyone enjoyed it thoroughly — well-written, honest and entertaining.

Up At Night

what keeps me up at night
is knowing that my nephew
and my lil' sis'
big sis', moms and fam'
is all missing me
and knowing that i let them down
when they were in my corner
thinking i knew
everything
i just hope when i get out
i can show them
that i really love them
with my actions instead of words

-Artie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope you can show them with actions, too. But whatever you do outside, starts with the inside of you. So we congratulate you on making a decision to change, 'cause now you're in your corner, too, instead of missin' in action, mayne!

To The Beat Within

First of all, I wana say thank you to The Beat Within for giving us youth the opportunity to share our feelings and stories while we are behind bars. My name is Daniel, aka Pelon. I've been reading The Beat since I came here to Hillcrest Juvenile Hall.

I've been here for about a year plus. It's been a while since I haven't seen my familia. I have a long story to share with all the Beat Readers, but I still don't know how this system works. I would like to if I can send some of my art and poetry because I want to share my stories and art projects. I would like to know if you guys can send me some of The Beat magazines with my art and poetry that I will send.

Well, let me share how I started reading The Beat. There was a vato on my unit who let me borrow some Beat within magazines, and the first thing that impressed me was the art projects from Michael Orozco. Then I started reading the poems and stories from people in other counties and prisons. The ones that impressed me the most is when I started reading The Beat Without articles. It just impressed me and made me hate being locked up.

I would like to receive your magazine. This is the first time I write to The Beat within. I have poems and art I would like to share with everybody, and a long story about my crazy life and how it changed after being locked up for a year and a half. I hope you take this letter in consideration because I am really interested in your articles at The Beat Within magazine. Thank you for your great magazine, and special thanks to The Beat Within staff for making this happen.

I came here on July 12, 2005, and am still fighting my case. And I feel firme (good) because God gives me hope. I know for a fact that I will get out. I have a lot of plans and goals when I get out, and also I have a girl and a baby waiting for me.

I hope you guys write me back. Stay up.

-Daniel

From The Beat: We are honored and pleased that The Beat means so much to you, that you want to share your art and stories with our readers. Here's how it works. Unfortunately, the system that operates Hillcrest doesn't share your enthusiasm for the big Beat. We agree with you that the pieces written by elders that we publish in the back (The Beat without) is some of the most powerful writing we publish, and gives some of the best advice and guidance to young people like you. But since the system here doesn't see it the same way, they won't allow you to read the big Beat. However, if you send us stories and art, we will publish it in the back, and send the big Beat to your home or to an address where you or your parents or loved ones can receive it and read what you've contributed. Do you have any ideas how we can convince those in charge just how valuable the publication can be to young people like you so that everyone can benefit from this publication?

Why You Say This

When you said you love me, you hate me
When you said you cry for me, you laugh
When you said I miss you,
You really said forget that foo'

But when you told your friend I'm going to let my vato
You didn't mean it

Because you know that you needed me in your vida
When you said I want to give you a kiss you kiss me
It was cool and everything I enjoyed

But when you finished
You used your hands to clean your nice lips
When we talk you said a lot of nice things

But in your mind while you are looking at me
You were saying I want to kill this foo'

When you with me or along,
You be thinking about da good days we had
But when you with your friends

You like the foo' is on my head
I have him on check and this and that
When you meet new people you holla at them

And said I don't have a boyfriend
But when you with my homies
You said I'm going out with Lil' Vato

But was up with you and me

-Lil' Vato

From The Beat: Maybe her feelings are changing, even from day to day. Maybe when she wiped away your kiss, she wasn't even thinking about what it looked like. Maybe she loves you one day, but then you do something to piss her off, and her feelings change. Or maybe love is truly like a roller coaster, up one minute and down the next.

Someone Who Cared

I once had someone that cared so much for me and all he was trying to do was help me out and push his problems aside, when he really needed my help as well. I was so caught up on myself that I didn't see how others were going through shhh too, especially him. He took the time to listen to me, to care for me, pamper me, and love me, but I didn't pay attention to what was going on in his life.

He took the time so I could meet his jefita and familia, but I never took the time to introduce him to mine. But he stuck through. I hurt him so much, y se aguitaba por mi, por las estupideces que le hice (and he was worried about me for the mistakes I made). Now the pain kills me because I feel like nothing. No, I was not in love with him. At first I did believe I loved him but no, he gave me a lil' glimpse of true love. Sticking true. Just remember: never leave the one you love for the one you like because the one you like will leave you for they one they love! Alratos,

-Morenita

From The Beat: Even though you're already gone from Hillcrest, you're still spitting knowledge on our pages! What we think you've described here is the best kind of love. Being "in love" complicates everything, but having the true love of a friend like this is a precious gift. We're sorry that you no longer have the love of this person in your life, either because the two of you have moved on or because he's no longer in this world. But now it's up to you to give back what he gave you by being a true friend to the next struggling young person who is desperate for the right kind of friendship.

Up At Night

What keeps me up at night is my family's worries. I constantly have them on my mind. I try to just forget about them, but I can't. I ask God to take care of my family so at times I can actually feel like God has me in here for a great reason, and when my time behind these walls is done, I'm going to be a better person and get everything that I had before and even more.

When I pray to God all of my problems seem to be just cleared from my mind, and I tell myself — and I'm sure of this — that God has me in here to have a better relationship with Him and also with my family. I thank Him for helping me realize what I almost lost in my life even though it's been shown to me in a very tough way. I really thank my God above! Because when He releases me, I'm going to have a total different life. Until then, I'm just the same as everyone in here! But spiritually and with the Man above, I'm already changed.

-Andre

From The Beat: It takes a very mature young person to see his incarceration as a kind of blessing, a lesson from God to be learned. And it takes an even more mature person to take that lesson to heart, and to realize that your relationship with God has to take the place of those other relationships that have led you to this sad place. What are some of those "total" differences you expect to see when you walk out of here? How will you hold to your promise of staying true to God's plan for you?

Sometimes I Wonder...

Which cartoon characters are in my chocolate wonder ball

When's the next time I have money to go to the mall

I wish I didn't get locked up in juvenile hall
When's the next time I can get a phone call

All these things I wonder about

Because I have too much free time

That I could be a mime... hahaha

-Mime

From The Beat: With all that time to make all these rhymes it would truly be fine if you'd devote one or two lines to the task of making your life sublime.

Sometimes I Wonder

Sometimes I wonder what I would do once I got out of jail. Would I go back to the society and be the same way as I used to be, or should I go to school and continue to college? If I go back to school, I would've missed many things, and material from many classes. I don't think I could catch up with the class. So if I go back to school, I would be way behind in my classes, but of course, there is always another route. I can take a test as a shortcut to get my high school diploma.

Or, I could go back in the society and be running from the law. Sometimes I wonder what would happen if I go back to society or continue to college and get my degree. If I go back to society I will always be running from laws, worrying about my front door getting kicked down. But if I continue to college, I would get a job after getting my B-A. I think I would major in Robotic Engineering if I am going to college.

Sometimes I wonder which route will I take that gets me to success, to get enough money to support my family. And I always wonder, "What will I do with my life?"

-Pa

From The Beat: We think you're much too smart not to know the outcome of the two alternatives you present here. In fact, you even write what the consequences of continuing life as you've been living it — "worrying about my front door getting kicked down." So, you already know that going back to school, even though you're behind, is the right path for moving you out of the criminal justice system and onto a road with a meaningful payoff down the line — a payoff that includes your freedom! No, we have no doubts that you know what choice is in your best interest, but that doesn't mean you'll make those decisions that help you and don't hurt you. Time will tell us the answer to that.

What Keeps Me Up At Night

What keeps me up at night is the uncomfortable mattress. The mattress is like an inch thick and the bunk is metal, so basically you're sleeping on metal. What also keeps me up at night is thinking about my family and my girlfriend and how I hurt them by getting locked up. What also keeps me up at night is thinking about what I'm gonna do when I get outta here.

I'm always thinking about how I'm gonna stay outta here because this place is really old now and I'm tired of seeing the same things over and over again and doing the same things. Sometimes I worry about what if I came back. Because when I get out of here I am on my last chance and if I ruin it, it's a wrap.

-Looney

From The Beat: Well, Looney, it seems obvious that you know what you can't do (run), but you're less clear about what you should do. We can't answer that for you, but we can say with certainty that if you continue doing the things that bring you to lock-up, you will be facing even more dark and deep consequences down the line. So, when you're think about how you're gonna stay out of here, we hope it includes going to school, getting your diploma — and staying away from the things that are your downfall!

My Dreams, My Sleep

Having nightmare visions of Jesus crying
 Half the teardrops that He got
 Probably for all the people that's been shot
 For some people these dirty deeds just can't stop
 Because the devil's inside of them and they just can't run
 Or else the devil's gonna persuade G-O-D
 To send them to the soil of T-O-D (death)
 Where the heads and bodies are all hanging
 So for those it's a win or lose situation
 Yaadaamean

-Lil' Diamonds

From The Beat: Do you literally have nightmares of Jesus crying for all those that are dying? Does the fear of Hell make you want to do well? So, what changes do you plan when you're back out in the land?

What Keeps You Up at Night

I have a few people who keep me up at night.
 The first person is my boyfriend Randy. I think about him all day and all night, when I eat, when I don't eat, when I'm sitting, when I'm standing. I hate being so close to him yet so far away. I get this terrible feeling in my stomach, lonely.

Another person who keeps me up at night is my mama. We've been through so much stuff together and being away from her hurts me. I think to myself at night I just wanna go home.

Last but not least is my sisters. I raised them because my mom was doing things that made her incapable of taking care of two young girls. I think about if they're OK and where they are or what they're doing. I haven't seen them in about two years because my aunt adopted them and said I could not see them. I also miss my other family, David, Jessica, Patricia, Saul and mi tio Abran. I love them and think of them all of the time. They have truly been a family to me.

-Rachel

From The Beat: When you were out, were you living with your mom? Did you and she get along? Why did your aunt refuse to let you see your sisters? How old are they? Are you doing anything to change your life so that your aunt will re-evaluate her decision and allow you to reunite with them when you're free? In short, what changes do you plan to make when you get out of here so that you won't find yourself in the same situation in the future, missing out on sleep because of the people you've been taken from?

Leaving Everything Behind

I've been trying to figure out what's going to happen to me once I get out. I've been here three months. I was supposed to get sent back to my tierra, Mexico, but my parents didn't want to. Next choice was to get sent to a group home outta state, but my jefita argued and convinced my PO to let me stay close by. My jefe and carnala been trying to find a group home, but no luck yet. It's either too expensive, they don't accept our insurance, or they don't accept minors off probation.

I'ma be off probation with my max time done when I get out. My parents need to talk to my PO 'cause there's a possibility my parents ain't gonna be able to find somewhere for me to go, which means my PO has to agree to release me to my parents or reopening my case of grand theft auto. I got less than two weeks to go, so hopefully it works out. Now I have to sustain myself calm and not get in any other pedos or fights.

I already made some change for when I get out. I promised my jefe that when I get out I'm gonna dress more "pretty girl" and not all "tumbada" like I always do. I promised my jefita that I'm gonna go back to school and catch up. I made a promise to my carnalito I don't feel I've met which was to care for him and stay in his life. I feel I've lost all this year to nothing. This whole year I was probably home only forty-five days, on and off, being a "vaga" en las calles (a thug in the streets).

I gave everything up — my education, my friends, my feelings, my style, my brain — to become a chola. But now I have to leave all this shhh behind and get everything back, not to be the same old person but to be a new improved me. Shhh, those days were good, not having to watch my back and worry if I'ma be alive the next minute. Left it all for a vato, a pandillero, who don't give a damn for me anymore. I became so attached to living the crazy life and I now it's gonna take some time to leave all of it behind. But it's worth a try, que no? I'm gonna do it for myself and push myself a lil' bit more for my familia. Until my release date, alratos!

-Morenita

From The Beat: Now this is what we're talking about, Morenita! We hope you're still able to read The Beat even though you're already out, because we want to tell you that your mind is just where it needs to be. Of course, knowing what's right and wrong and knowing what you have to do to put this lifestyle behind you is not the same as actually doing it. You will have all kinds of temptations from people who claim to be your friends, but aren't really thinking about your future. So it's up to you. You have to have the strength to say no, and the self-motivation to start walking down a different path. You may have given up your brain for your lifestyle, but it wasn't a permanent donation. You're still very much in control of your brain, and it's still working very well, so use it to keep yourself out of places like this and put yourself into a decent life!

Not The Way To Live

As I sit in this cell waiting for the day I'll be out this living hell, I look at the sky and start thinkin' about all the things I left behind. And I know this is not the way to live this crazy life. But sometimes we make mistakes that will always stay alive. Sometimes I look out the window hoping someone would come tomorrow and take away the living sorrow. Life has seasons, so if you are sad and in pain, feel good 'cause you never know w'at will come tomorrow.

But I'll learn how to handle this time that keeps on slippin'. I'll just start thinking of my jaina and my baby, and start dreaming while I'm in this cell locked up, feeling hella messed up.

-Pelon

From The Beat: If you know this is not the way to live, do you also know what is the way to live? Do you know what you're going to do differently when you get out of here so that this is your last experience with lock-up? What?

Sometimes I Wonder...

Sometimes I wonder what it's going to take to get my shhh together
 Sometimes I wonder why I do the things I do, knowing where they're going to lead me
 Sometimes I wonder why I hurt my loved ones as much as I do
 Sometimes I wonder if God really hears me crying every night, asking for forgiveness
 Sometimes I wonder on what it was that made me turn out this way
 Sometimes I wonder if all the pain I've caused my mother will ever be cured
 Sometimes I wonder if my time to leave the system will ever come
 Sometimes I wonder if I'll ever be the good girl everyone saw me as once before
 But most importantly, sometimes I wonder if my mother will be able to forgive me one day

-Jazzy

From The Beat: Most of these questions will require the passage of time to answer. But some we can guess at. For one, if you're sincere in asking God for forgiveness (meaning you don't want to repeat the behavior you're asking to be forgiven for), then you've already been forgiven because you have changed direction. Your mother will forgive you because she is your mother, and mothers have unconditional love for their daughters, even when they've been hurt by them. We believe you acted as you did because you were still a child, thinking of yourself as the center of the universe and not caring much about how you affected others. The fact that you wonder about why you did those things now tells us that you are no longer thinking as a child, but are maturing into young adulthood. And that tells us that your questions will most likely have good answers in the future.

Never Lost My Mind

No, I have not lost my mind, but I felt that I have been very close to it. How do you lose your mind, you say? Well, for me, I felt like you just have so much energy that it all lashes out at once, making you scream, yell, hurt yourself or cry. So what I try to do when I start to feel these things is I start to work out in my room so I could get tired and won't be able to have energy to go crazy.

But I forgot, you could also go crazy mentally just as well as physically. I start to think about my life and family, then the things I regret in life and become sad. But I try to fight those bad feelings by thinking of the good times in life because you could only defeat evil with good.

Sometimes when I'm in my room so long I feel I just want to stay there and rot — not eat, bathe, think, just sit and do nothing and let my time pass. What can fight this is picking up a book and taking my mind elsewhere. But when that book is over, I realize I'm still where I am and can't get out. I just think about when I get free and the goals and positive things I can do to get the best out of this place.

I can get my GED and high school diploma. When I am done doin' what I do in here I'm ready to make my place in life and be nothin' but greatness.

-Marky

From The Beat: It sounds like you have developed some very important and effective strategies to fight off those feelings of losing it, whether mentally or physically. Do you ever just let it all go, just let the tears flow until it passes? What kind of books do you like to read to take your mind off your troubles? Are you working towards your GED or diploma now? What do you want to do in life, and how do you see yourself achieving that goal?

So Lost!

Have I ever lost my mind?
 Oh so many damn times
 From wondering when will things ever be fine
 Or even from sniffing too many lines
 The voices at night that talk to me
 The visions of "people" I often see
 It's driving me insane
 It's ravishing my brain
 Sometimes I don't know if it's real or if it's fake
 I have to take meds to finally sleep
 Because if I don't I won't sleep for a week,
 And continue to tweak
 My mind is so lost and gone for good
 Just like a drug addict's mind usually would

-Lil' Sniffles

From The Beat: Whether you know it or not, the fact that you can put together a short poem like this packed with information about how you have contributed to your own "insanity" through drug abuse is proof that you are far from losing your mind, and that if there are parts of your mind that don't work as well as they used to, it's not because your mind is "lost and gone for good." It's the "for good" part that we know isn't true. You are young. You are smart. Your brain still produces. So, the "for good" part is entirely in your hands. How you turn out is still a work in progress.

Things Change

Things change and life'll never be the same
So take it easy, ease the pain
Don't play no games
'Cause you finna lose in the end of things
Just remember me

I'm the one that said that I would never be caught up wit'
felonies

But guess what? Things change eventually

So don't take things for granted
'Cause sooner than later you finna get your ass kicked
Don't blap no steel and stay away from plastics
'Cause them fakes'll get you rapped, kid
Actin' hard'll get you lyin' in a casket
So change before life does
Or you might get shafted

-Ajax

From The Beat: The advice in this piece sounds very simple and direct, but it is actually very deep and important. You're right, things change. In fact, change is one of the most predictable of all events. The question is not whether things change, but how they change. What do you plan to do to make the changes in your life the kind that move you away from places like this and towards college and a decent future?

Gracias A Dios

I give thanks to God for giving me a loving mother and father, wachando lo que hago todo el tiempo (watching over what I'm doing all the time) and never giving up on me. Le doy gracias a Dios por estar donde estoy, pero me lastima porque se que voy a sigir con mi tumbado y mis ojos colorados (I give thanks to God for being where I am, but tears because I'm going down the same path with the same red eyes). I give thanks to God for leading me into this vida, showing me how life ain't easy. It's always tough, showing me wrong from right. Le doy gracias a Dios por darme estas lagrimas (I give thanks to God for giving me these tears) and letting me suffer, learning how love hurts. I give thanks to God for giving me estas sonrisas (these smiles) and good times that fulfilled my life. Le doy gracias a Dio por darme lo que tuve y por lo que todavia tengo, y por estar donde estoy. Alratos.(I give thanks to God for what I had and what I still have, and for where I am.)

-Morenita

From The Beat: Did we read this right, Morenita? Are you planning to continue repping, continue with the lifestyle that has led you to lose so many of your homies and taken so much of your freedom? We hope we just translated this wrong, because we don't see how you can give thanks to God while living a life that is like an insult to the plan God has in store for you.

Sometimes I Wonder . . .

I wonder if I was away from these walls if my lady would have aborted. I wonder if I would have been a good father. I wonder how things are out there right now. I wonder if I'm ever going to get these days back. I hope God gives me the answers to this.

-Andre

From The Beat: The things you are wondering about are the natural by-product of being taken away from the life you exercised some control over and put into a situation where you have no control. We don't know whether your girl would have aborted or not, and we don't know if you would have encouraged her to do so or not (because fatherhood is probably the most difficult job in the world, next to motherhood, and postponing it until more maturity comes your way would not necessarily be a bad thing.) Anyway, with your commitment to living God's plan, we hope you gain that control over your life again soon.

Until The End Of Time

People say that there's no such thing as a real homie, pero if that statement is true then why do I have so many that have always been true? I've been high, I've been low. No matter what, they have never let me go. Whenever I frown they go out of their way to paint my face a smile. Their home is my home. My home is their home. From day one they've always been there for me, just how I've always been there for them. They have my back. I have theirs. Always and forever they're the ones who keep me going in this place with the letras they send me.

To all, don't trip. I'll always be here. I won't forget my homies. Alrato.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: This is an unusual tribute to the fidelity and loyalty of homies who many others have said flake away when you get locked up. We're happy for you that you have this support, but how come your homies didn't prevent you from giving up your freedom? How come their support wasn't enough to keep you free? What are they not giving you that you need to supply for yourself?

Rest In Peace

Every night I reminisce about the things the three of us used to do. Sometimes, I stay up all night long wishing what happened to you both isn't true.

It's been so hard getting over the fact that I won't see you both again.

Matthew, you were my world. David, you were my best friend.

Matthew, I can't believe the addiction took over your life and won.

David, I replay the night I yelled at you over and over in my head,

and can't believe your pain was ended by a gun.

I want you both to know you live on through the memories I keep.

I miss you both so much, but I'll see you both in my dreams.

RIP Matthew Gonzalez and David Thompson

-Whispers

From The Beat: What a lot of pain to be carrying around at so young an age — and over tragedies that never should have happened! Why do you think that Matthew couldn't get control over the substance that was controlling his life? What could have helped him? And why didn't David see what is so clear to us, that the "war" in the street has no meaning beyond the street except for the permanent losses that are measured in the lives of these young men? What can we (and you) — and even the system — do to address some of the problems and situations that lead to such tragic ends?

Have You Ever Lost Your Mind?

When I lost my mind, I didn't care about anything. Life, death, didn't mean anything to me. I didn't care if I died or not. It didn't matter. Nothing mattered any more. For that moment I felt lost, angry and insecure about everything. My hate consumed me. It was overwhelming and uncontrollable. Nothing could stop it.

But at that point in time, my deepest emotions came out, and I was able to express all my emotions: my anger that was built up, all my disappointment that I have gone through in my life and all the hate that had been stored for so many years. But my most painful emotion comes out at the end: my sorrow for losing it, feeling sick for letting myself lose it.

-Hector

From The Beat: You have a lot to say in your writing, Hector. Why do you think you got to that point of not caring if you lived or died? And when your emotions poured out, how did you express them? Were there tears? Screams? Depression? What carried you through this moment of emotional outpouring? How do you feel now, and how did the change come about?

What Keeps Me Awake

What keeps me up at night?

Knowing that my brother's alone

Knowing that my mommy's heart is broken into pieces

Knowing my dad is messing up his life

Knowing that my little cousin doesn't know where I am

And knowing that people know where I am

Knowing that people aren't surprised that I'm here

The worst thing that keeps me up is knowing at the same time

My grandma is crying like crazy because I'm here

Another thing that keeps me up is

What am I going to do when I'm out there and not in here

Another thing that I think about is

How are people gonna see me when I get released

Are they gonna see me the same as they always do

Whenever I get released?

No! Now this is the part that lets me finally go to sleep!

Because I know I'ma do better and prove people wrong

And make my friends and my family proud of me

-Chanel

From The Beat: Well, of course we love the determination you show at the end of this piece to prove all the haters wrong. That's a good motivation for changing your life around. We're interested to know what goes through your mind when you think about what you're going to do when you get out of here. The answer to that question makes all the difference in the world to whether you are able to keep your promise to do better. So we hope you have a real plan for when you touch down, and that plan should be based on finishing your schooling.

Remembering

I wake up at night and notice you ain't by my side. It hurts me so much, the fact we had to say good-bye. Blood is dripping from my heart. As I think of all those firme times we shared I don't even know where to begin or where to end. I feel like a crumbled sugar cookie, just falling apart.

I remember those times when we still sit in your room and hear them oldies. It's amazing how you just disappear like that. The one thing I loved is when you would pronounce my name and dedicate sweet oldies to me. I just know you will be the only special person I always counted on when I was confused. You were my best friend and you will always remain in my heart and you will never be replaced. Dedicated to Chapin. Always,

-Tiny

From The Beat: Why do you think you already have the death of at least two dear loved ones to carry around? How did they contribute to their fates? What could they have done to change their lives and live long? What can you do?

Love Is Pain

Love is pain
That's all I seem to gain
The game is getting old
'Cause it gets replayed over and over
again
Wondering why it never gets changed
Maybe one day
I'll find the one
That will change my mind
But until then I'll wait
Until it's time
To love again

-Deborah

From The Beat: We have no doubt that "one day" that special person will show up in your life, probably when you're least expecting it. In the meantime, we hope you'll work on loving yourself, and therefore keeping yourself free and moving forward.

You

You call yourself a playa
'Cause it seems you played a few
You didn't realize
It was me playin' you
It's true you were good
An' came out a winner
But next to me you were still a
beginner
Dere's lots of learnin'
An' you ain't shhh yet
You said you didn't care
But why are you so upst
Beggin' on your knees
For me to stay?
How does it feel to lose?
How does it feel to be a failure?
How does it feel to get played?

-Brownie

From The Beat: We're leaving this in The Beat, Brownie, but it's not really a Beat piece. This is a personal note to someone that you have some sort of relationship with, each of you believing that you played the other. To make it a true Beat piece, you need to explain how this relates to more than just the two of you. In fact, we took out the second of your two love poems (the other was titled "When I Met You") because they both say essentially the same thing, they both deal with the same guy, and they both teach nothing beyond a personal lesson for the two of you. Why not forget about him and write about your future. That's what's important.

What Keeps Me Up At Night

What keeps me up in the night is when I think about my mother, and I think how is my mother doing, if she is safe, if nothing bad happened to her, and if she is sick. Also I think about my brothers. I think if they are OK, if nothing bad happened to them. And I start to think about the bad and good things that I used to do when I was out, everything that I have done.

I know that the things that I was doing are wrong, and are bad for myself. And I know that my mother is really sad because I'm here right now. In the night I start to think about all these things, and I know that I have to change, and I have to stop doing some things that aren't good for me. And I want to stop doing it because

I don't want to see the people that I love crying.

Now I'm thinking about my future and how I want to change to have a better life because I don't want to come back here, and I don't want to see my mother sad. I want to see her happy because I love her and it hurts me when I see her crying.

-Yessica

From The Beat: If thinking about your mother and the tears you have put in her eyes helps you to change direction, then her tears are worth it! When she looks at you, why do you think she wants to cry? Is it because of where you are now, or where she is afraid you will end up? Where do you want to end up? How do you plan to get there?

I'll Never Forget

Damn. I sit and think of all the fine times I shared with my homegirl Dreamer in Mountain View - her and her vato Lil' Shadow and Chapin and me. I can't get them out of my mind. It's amazing how that fast we had to tell the special persons we love good-bye. But I know it will always carry those good times in our hearts and I know they won't ever disappear in our hearts. Always,

-Tiny

From The Beat: Yes, you will always carry the memory of these young men in your heart. But what a tragedy that they chose to live a life so easily cut short! Does their passing change the way you want to live?

I long to gaze upon pages so dear
With riches to bring
my loved ones near
Words of diamonds on pages of gold
A message of heaven
as my story is told

Drifting On A Memory

I'm sitting here reminiscing about the past
Wondering how we made our relationship last
But who knew you'll be wasting my time
On just all of your lies
And always hiding my pain inside
It took me time to realize
You're not the type of human being
That you were thought to be
And not even satisfying each other's needs
This is why maybe
We weren't meant to be

-Deborah

From The Beat: What we find most interesting about this piece is not that your "man" turned out to be a boy because that's a pretty common story, but that you once thought you were "meant to be" and now realize that love can blind you to a person's real intentions and character. We're sorry you had to experience this, but it is a good lesson to those who, even at the very young age of teens, think they have found the love of their lives, only to find that what they thought was love was only temporary. We don't know anybody, free or not, who hasn't experienced something similar, though, so chalk this up to experience that helps us to grow up.

Things I Wonder

Sometimes I wonder if I'm gonna get out
Sometimes I wonder if I'm gonna stop
Doing the things I'm not supposed to be doing
Sometimes I wonder if I'm gonna change
Sometimes I wonder if everything in my life's
gonna be different
But wait, life is not all about "wonders"
I'm gonna say I know that my whole life is gonna
change
So that I don't end up locked again and
wondering

-Dimples

From The Beat: You're right, Dimples, you can reduce the "wondering" if you follow through on your commitment to change. If you keep doing the things you're not supposed to do, then you don't have to wonder about coming back... you will. So make those changes you know you have to make, and stop wondering.

What Keeps Me Up

What keeps me up at night is thinking about my family, my girlfriend, what I would be doing if I was out of here. If I was out of here I'd probably be kickin' it with my two brothers or my girlfriend or my homegirls.

-Richard

From The Beat: This isn't much of a Beat contribution for an hour's time, Richard. When you think about "kickin' it" with your family and homegirls, does that mean going back to the things that brought you here? If not, what changes are you contemplating?

Bring Me Mail

Darkness and loneliness fill my cell
With pain and fear too great to yell
I wait for the mailman to deliver to me
As I wipe away tears that no one will see
I pray so sincere with head raised above
Please, God, soon send a letter of love
I long to gaze upon pages so dear
With riches to bring my loved ones near
Words of diamonds on pages of gold
A message of heaven as my story is told
Please bring memories of joys I once knew
Family, friends, and things I would do
The darkness and pain of my cell will prevail
As my name again was not called for mail

-Pelon

From The Beat: Is it true, Pelon, that you don't receive mail from those you love while you're locked up? Why is that? We can only imagine the loneliness you must experience being locked up without words of support and love from the outside. Well, there's only one solution to this problem, and that is for you to get out of here and not come back! That way you can create even more joy in your life so that you don't have to rely only on memories.

I know that the things that I was doing
are wrong, and are bad for myself. And
I know that my mother is really sad
because I'm here right now.

Thinking

My mom keep me up at night 'cause she always on my mind, no matter what, and my brother and cousin that's in max keep me up at night and keep me up.

My mom keeps me up 'cause I be worried about her iand the rest of my family 'cause it's a lot of stuff happening on them streets. And my Auntie keeps me up and my bbrotha-in-law.

That's why I be up just thinking about hella shhh 'cause when I'm behind the door it's just a lot of stuff on your mind.

Beat, all my dead homies keep me up at night 'cause I miss the days riding around getting loaded all night.

So Beat all of this stuff that I wrote worries me and scared me when the stuff happened. But they all looking down on me and guiding me while I'm on the turf always.

-Baby T
From The Beat: As wonderfully, heartfelt and telling of the true worries of what keeps you up in the hall, still we are bothered that you end this piece by letting us readers know that no matter how ugly it is, you still put your dumb butt back out there on the turf! Wake up young homie! Selfishly, you are still thinking of only you, not your mom, not your aunt, not your blood family, but your own needs and whatever satisfaction you get from the turf. Come on! We don't know what to believe when you write about your concerns, yet throw yourself back into the fire aka turf.

Lost Family, Lost Friends

i'm just wanting to say r i p
even though it ain't me
see i got lost family and lost friends
to be with until the end
r i p cell, chris and vern
my folks that died, didn't deserve
so i'll make this fast
they' time should last
the cold part is some died over cash
i stress at night
its people i don't like
people look at my eyes
and think i can't fight
but like E40 said
i'm jus happy to be here
r i p to my folks that had no fears

-Demetri
From The Beat: There are things to fear, 'cause it's a warning that will keep you out of here and keep you breathing instead of dead. So when you're warned by fear, try to use your head. It's not a life style you're living but a death, or a get-locked-up-at-best. We mourn Cell, Chris and Vern, too — get up off the street before it happens to you.

I Just Can't Wait

What keeps me up at night, is when I think about all the things that I'm going to do when I get out of Camp!

I think about my career and what college I'm going to go to. And I often think of the business things I'm going to try to start. I also think about females I've had intercourse with, and how much I miss it.

Plus I think about how I can't wait 'til my home pass — and especially when I'm getting released! I count the days, and it makes it seem as if the days are going by slower.

-LaVaedra
From The Beat: You're ready to live your life, and you feel like life is outside waiting for you. We understand, but on the other hand, you can use this time at Camp productively, too — whether it's school, GED class, other programs, or just readying yourself to resist the temptations (to fail and return to jail) that will come at you in familiar and unexpected ways.

Up At Night

A lot of things keeps me up at night. The first thing is thinking of my mom hoping and wishing that she is all right and not stressing and my grandma too.

The second thing is just hoping and praying that I get my freedom back.

-Rodnelle
From The Beat: You will get your freedom back. The question is, what are you going to do with it? We hope you cherish it and stay safe. We're sure your mom and grandma hope the same for their son.

The Ones I Love

the people i love don't play with their lives because even if you do you will become paralyzed that goes for my family, my friends, and my girl so stop playing with me about the people i love as i see it they all are beautiful inside and out so don't mess with my peoples unless you want a drought they are the most important things that i have without them i would be also sad but mainly mad so stop messing with the people i have

-Lil' Drew
From The Beat: To whom is this addressed? Despite the love in it, and the claim that the people you "love don't play with their lives" — this sounds like a threat. Don't you know that throwing out threats is like throwing gasoline on fire — it doesn't put it out but makes it flame that much higher!

RIP Lil' Mike

What it do, Beat Within! It yo' boy Fredy! My piece for this Rest In Peace issue is about my brah, Mike. All my brah's loved Mike.

We all was from the same block, and we grew up on that block. It was me, Row, Big Boi, D-boy, Beely Bo, Lil' Will, Kev, St, Lewy. Mike would say, "Lil' Fred, I ain't good for a 'Port?'" And I would give him three of them.

I was just getting out of jail, and I said I was going to stay at home. It's what I did for two days, and the second day, I got a call. They said that Mike had got killed. I was mad! And I cried.

RIP Lil' Mike, born and raised on the spot. We all love you! RIP: Lil' Mike.

-Fredy
From The Beat: Sorry but we don't consider names like Mac and Pimp, nor do we print turf or gang calls. Still, we understand how deep your love for those who grew up with you — they feel like family, and when one dies, the grief goes deep. It's the game that kills though, so refuse to play — we don't need any more young men dying that way.

What Keeps Me Up at Night

What keeps me at night is the fact that I'm in Juvenile Hall over a female I loved, based on the fact that when I tried to let her go and I break up with her, she goes and starts all kinds of drama that just doesn't need to be started.

It was the kind of drama that put me in here in Juvenile Hall, because she wants to hold a grudge to start things that are very serious to me. The charges put on me because her lies she brought me into the system. I

It's gonna haunt me for a long time. She told the police that I beat her, threatened her with a knife. She has gotten me two felonies and two misdemeanors.

She said these things but she knows I would never ever do that because I love her too much. Destiny V. I will always love her. I hope in the future we can get all this stuff over with our life and live our lives forever.

-Matthew
From The Beat: We are so confused by this piece, because we can't tell if this is a relationship you want to continue or not. First you say you tried to break up with her, which started all the drama, but then you end up saying that you want to be with her forever. This sounds like an incredibly stressful relationship — with the anger and the accusations and the counter accusations, and it sounds like there's a lot of He Said/She Said going on. We hope things work out for you, and that whatever is going on under this pain and confusion gets cleared up. Peace.

RIP Emmitt

What keep me up at night is, is my family safe? How are they doing? What are they doing and how I could've prevented from being in this facility.

When I found out Lil' Emmitt died I went bad on everybody. I remember when we stayed in our old place, I had got into a fight and Emmitt ran all the way up the street and stumped 'em and we was laughing.

-Black Isaac
From The Beat: You must have felt so much pain and rage when you found out your friend died. So many young men have died due to drugs, turfs, and gangs. Take care of yourself, live long for Emmitt!

What Keeps You up at Night

What keeps me up at night is being with my friends, smoking every night, walking around in the middle of the night doing stupid stuff. That's why I'm up in here. I robbed someone with a knife while smoking and popping some pills. I stabbed him on accident.

-Lil Foot
From The Beat: That's the problem with doing too much drugs: you lose control and accidents happen. Take better care of yourself. If you know all this trouble is keeping you up at night, think about a way out of it. Don't let accidents rule your life. The accident could have been much more costly, like you killing this person and you looking at a murder charge. Wise up!

R.I.J. = Rest In Jail

rest in jail, for all my ninja's in y a
especially for my benny
he is in the 'y' for a couple of years
i just hope he be strong
i know the judge did you wrong
but the time isn't all that long
just mind your own business and you'll be out in no time

and i know you could do it . you'll be cool
just keep your mouth shut and don't act a fool
but know when you get out, you will be stunting
because you will still have your van with the big
ass buttons
but keep your head high and think right
and when you come home keep your it tight
on the real, see you in the hood soon

-Lil' Drew
From The Beat: Staying chill in the Y, is part of the challenge. But what you really want to manage is a change of heart and mind. Your heart will tell you how much you don't ever want to do time again in your life. So tell Benny to educate his mind while he's there, get his degree or GED and get in any job training program he can find. Then when he's released, get a j-o-b and stay free! 'Cause everybody needs money but nobody needs jail.

Home Pass

What it do Beat? This is Dreamer, from Hayward, comin' at y'all from Camp. This weekend I get my first home pass! Since it's my first one, I'm a just kick it with my family 'cause it's been a min'!

It still feels like I just got here. Time goes hella fast up here. So, to all the homies waiting to come to Camp, don't trip 'cause you'll be in-and-out hella quick too. By the time this beat comes out, I'll already be on my overnights! So, to all who are still behind those AlaCo walls and doors, keep it trucha and solid. Alrato.

-Dreamer
From The Beat: Sorry we had to cut your RIP. To include it in our pages, you need to write a piece about that person and your relationship to him/her. Tell us something about the person, and you can even make RIP (name) the title of the piece. Otherwise, here's what you wrote, word for word. How are those overnights going? You still kicking it with family time and staying away from the scandalous kind?

Sometimes I Wonder

sometimes i wonder if i will ever change
the way i am and the things i do
and sometimes i wonder why i make
stupid decisions in my life that put me in these
awkward positions that i can't get out of
-Troy
**From The Beat: It's up to you to figure it out,
then make a commitment and follow through,
if change is ever to come about — it's entirely
up to you.**

Miss My Family Fun

what keeps me up at night
is not being able to be with my family
because i miss having fun with my family
and at night i think about all the fun
i had when i was with my family
-Jacob
**From The Beat: As long as you don't mean your
"family" in the street, this pain of separation
that brings you grief may also provide the
motivation you need to change your
thoughts and deeds.**

Thinking About

what keeps me up at night
is thinking about
what my family and friends
are doing without me
if they are thinking about me
wondering where i would be
goin' if i was out
and thinking about
how i got here
and what i will do different
when i get out
-A son
**From The Beat: In a few words, you say
pretty much what occupies every detainee's
mind. Tell us more about what you'll do
when you get out.**

What You Know

what you know, this boy
you know i get down
what you know about us
you know you don't like us
'cause we get money
what you know about yo'self
you know you be hatin'
what you know about eli
keep my name out yo' mouth
you know that
-Lil' Eli
**From The Beat: This reads like a billboard
advertising trouble. You're old enough now
so you don't need to chase street money
that means trouble. And you don't need
to get down with every clown with your
name in his mouth. Man, it sounds here
like you're trying to put your name in his
mouth. Better they don't know!**

Rest In Peace

Rest in peace, my ninja Kevin N. We all miss you.
Be safe up there. Hope you come look up for us.
Rest in peace grandpa. I miss you. You been
teaching me all the things i didn't know. You
raised me. I cried when i heard you was in the
hospital. I was so mad that i didn't go to school
for like two weeks! Rest in peace, Kevin N. and my
grandpa.
-Liou
**From The Beat: We understand your pain
when your grandpa, who raised you, went
into the hospital — but what good did it do
to skip school? Is that what he'd want you
to do? Nah, he came to this country hoping
you'd do good. Don't be another victim of the
'hood. For your grandpa's sake, get up off the
street and get your degree or GED, so you
can earn your money on a job, legally. That's
what it'll take for his spirit to RIP.**

Noise Keeps Me Up

What keeps me up at night?
The noises keep me up at night.
Thinking about my girl at night,
that's the first thing to keep me up at night.
Thinking about hanging out with my friends
roaming the street, that's what keeps me up at
night.
Everything I do on the outs keep me up at night
- drinking, driving, sex, guns —
all that kept me in here, that's what keeps me up
at night.
-Mien
**From The Beat: If what you mean is that you
miss the action on the outs, doing all the
things that keep bringing you back to lock
up, well then, all we can ask you is — when
will you have had enough of being locked
up? 'Cause repeating the same mistakes
expecting different results is crazy, and so
is volunteering for incarceration. But maybe
that's what you're saying, you're too crazy to
ever learn how to stay free? Nah, don't let
it be.**

I Wonder When

sometimes i wonder when
i'm gonna get out of here
because i don't think i'm better than nobody
it's just i feel i don't belong in here
i hope when i go to court
the judge gives me one more chance to change my life
-Art
**From The Beat: Maybe it's time you start to show
that you are better than the rest, 'cause up to now
(just like those sitting all around) you failed to
pass the test of staying free after your release
from lockdown. We hope you do get one more
chance, and stop trying not to do better than the
next. Do your best!**

Tribute

i want to pay tribute to my cousin lil' will
who lost his life in hayward over somebody hating
he showed me stuff that my mom and fam' didn't
kinda like he was the brother i never had
he was fifteen and died ahead of his time
it's crazy how you can
-Art
**From The Beat: It's crazy how someone you love
and respect, can choose to stay on a path that
leads to his death. The street is full of hate, so
if you think you might change your life — don't
wait!**

What You Know?

I known to sip 'Bo . I often mix it with my 'heem.
What you know about 'bo?
Four ounces make 'em lean. over to the side, back
and forth. Ooh it tastes good.
I want some more, falling to the floor.
I'm leaning too hard. I probably need to stop I'm
lacing all my chops
I get it from my doe, prescribes it to me like a
dummy,
if he only knew that i'm leaning with my buddies.
You can catch me leadin', codeinin',
promethazine-in, I drink it straight or mix it with
my heem.
-Cs
**From The Beat: We almost didn't print this
poem, because you are glorifying a poison -
- a literal poison that sickens and lames
whole neighborhoods. These are medicines that
deadens the minds, make us stupid, make
us vulnerable to accidents, bad judgement,
sickness... it's like those pill bottles are guns
you aim at your own head. So why did we
print it? Because your rhymes are so good,
underneath all the self-destructiveness we
could see a dazzling rhyme scheme and the
wrok of a young man who really cares about
words and rap and perfecting his own skills.
If only we could see you turn those skills to
making your life better, instead of celebrating
the things that make it worse.**

When Will I Find You

my love for you will never die
my tongue will tell you no lie
as our love reach for a new height
i cannot hide the feelings i have inside
i'll always be true
never want to make you blue
a beautiful smile you will always stay with
because love i don't play with
i'll always love you
i'll always be true
faithful, loyal and caring
i have a lot of love for sharing
i just need to find some sweet girl who
i'm ready, willing and able to give it to
-Benjamin
**From The Beat: When you start out, we think
you truly have a particular girl in mind, but by
the end we see that you're just trying to display
the romance in your heart, hoping something
real might get started.**

Rest In Peace Jwon

we all miss you
and can't stand knowing your killer
was not found
everybody's trying to find the killer
and it's harder than we thought
but we are trying still
well ... i miss you
and everybody else does too
-Jacob
**From The Beat: What goes down, comes around.
And even if the killer of Jwon is never found,
as surely as your loved one is buried in the
ground, his killer's fate is sealed, for to God the
truth has been revealed. Perhaps it is by God's
grace you'll never see his killer face to face, for
the temptation might prove to be too great.
Vengeance belongs to the Lord, according to his
Holy Word. Consider it done, and thank God you
need not be the one. For Judgment will come on
him that stands before God self-condemned by
his blood-stained hands.**

Don't Provoke Me

When you're in jail all is hell. Everybody telling and
provoking you that you're going to fail.
I have a baby mama that just told me something
I don't want to hear. Now all I can think of is when I'm
getting out of here.
Everyone is provoking me to fight them, but the
day is to come when I'm gonna get out of here and
they'll be looking dumb.
To The Beat, thanks for hearing me, because
most of these ninjas in here fear me but until next
time you won't hear me.
-Feared
**From The Beat: The social scene on the unit is
stressful. You aren't alone. Everyone's trying
to put their stress on someone else by hating,
provoking. We know you have the strength to
rise above it. Violence doesn't solve a damn
thing, it only brings on more problems. Stay calm
and focus on getting out!**

I Need To Get Out

Man I need to go home and stay home. I've been here
four times now and this shhhh is making me mad. I
need to be out doing my thing with my girl and my
ninjas. I need to get my shhhh together and get out of
this shhhh for good. I am almost 18 and I need money
so that means I need to get out of here bra bra and
get my shhhh right for I can get this money you feel
me bra bra. Stuiwe is in the hall and needs to get out
and stay out.
-Stuiwe
**From The Beat: We want you to get out and stay
out too — but we know that to make that happen
you need a plan. What's your release plan? We
hope your plan isn't to just do the same old thing,
but to try harder to avoid the police, because we
all know that doesn't work in the long run. Think
about school and a job. The money won't flow as
fast, but you'll stay free.**

RIP Mezzy and Bow Wow

i want to talk about how much i miss
my ninjas mezzy and bow wow
everyday i think about them and how
we used to kick it and get money
they both got killed while i was in a group home
they were two of the most solid ninjas i know
and i know as i write this
they both looking down smiling because
i'm keeping it lit for them until the day i join them
r i p mezzy and bow wow

-Big Sterl

From The Beat: You need to remember that when they get to heaven, their eyes are opened, and they finally see reality without the distorting lens of fear and pain that got engraved early on their earthly brains. Therefore, they look down on you and smile from high where loving memory is now their life style, but they frown and drop tears to the ground from up above the clouds, when they see you out there fixing to die keeping it lit in the street crowd. They want to see stand on two feet, walk away from incarceration and death, 'cause their eyes have been opened and they want to plant true revelation in your breast — get off the devil's playground; what goes down comes around. They want to see you live your life long and complete before you get buried six feet deep. Don't die young, is what they're sayin' — quit and go legit, is what they're up in heaven prayin'!

What Keeps Me Up

What keeps me up is thinking about my family, and how they are doing and hoping that my bra's are keepin' them safe. And how my bras are doin'. Hope that they stay safe too. I think about how I'm gon' get out and do my program without lettin' people hold me down and get me mad so I can get sent to the Y. I even think about all the females I did scandalous in the past and what they did for me.

-Lil' Rony

From The Beat: If you're really doing so much soul searching in here, it might just be that being locked up hasn't been such a bad thing. Like maybe twenty years from now, you'll look back at the decisions you made in Juvenile Hall this time and think "wow, that was really when I started to turn my life around"

It's Real

they got me stressing 'bout future years
so many funerals so many tears
god done blessed me this past year
headed fo' my last breath and my marked fo'
death
holding my forty tight
praying to god that i make it home at night
living a thugish life
i never stress 'cause i understand now
'cause i'm a man now
but yet still some act like life'll never cease
no longer at a playing level
truly knee-deep
till they bury me
fo'ever clutching my heat
just a thug from the streets
tryin' a make it from underneath
searching fo' the knowledge itself
but never feeling right wit'out snatching my
tech up off the shelf
i can make it on my own so don't offer ya help.

-Young Clyde

From The Beat: You need to see where you're at following this thugisha strategy. 'Cause it's a fact you're in deep, and way past your knees! So you can look forward to more of the same till you're buried in the ground, or you can wake up to what's really real and start thinking about how to turn your life around. Maybe you had no choices in your young life, and no older voices showing you how to live right, but now you're a man and old enough to understand that the thug life never goes according to plan. You need to take a higher stand, step up your game to another level — and leave the thugish life to hell and the devil.

A Lucky Guy

i am a really lucky guy
kind of
'cause today was my court date
and i thought i was getting out on e m
but when i went up there i found out
i'm fighting two new cases
one for burglary and one for grand theft
i admitted to one and they dismissed the other one
but eventually they still released me on e m
they was trying to send me to rita
i got to thank god that i'm goin' home
and for all those of you incarcerated
remember to talk to god
you never get your prayers answered
if you don't pray

-Jose

From The Beat: It's funny how we all try to make a deal with God when we pray, 'cause God doesn't make deals. But then, when we get exactly what we prayed for, we forget all about what we promised God when we were trying to make that deal. What did you promise God? And even if you didn't make promises, how will show God gratitude that your prayers were answered?

Two Out of Three of Us

The thing that keeps me up at night is the fact that I know my mom is going through a real tough time right now because two of her three sons are in jail — and are probably not coming home no time soon. And I know it is not good for her. So that is something that keeps me up at night.

-Barty

From The Beat: Sometimes hardest truth to face come to you when you try to go to sleep in this place. The best thing you can do for her now, is change yourself from the inside out, and let her know when you're released you'll make a new start. But even more importantly, let her know that what she tried to teach you about right and wrong, has finally taken root in your heart.

A Strong Heart

One of the reasons that keep me up at night is thinking about what I could have done to stay out of here.

Most of the time I be trippin' on my freedom and the people that I left behind, for example my loved ones like family, friends and most of all my beautiful wifey. Sometimes I regret what I did because I'm in this shhh hole, wasting sweet time when I could be on the outs going to school or looking for a job, doin' something positive for a change.

The fact that I'm in here finally made me realize what a waste of time this is, I can't change the past, but I could work on the future. Sometimes it gets depressing and lonely -- but I have a strong heart.

-Joseph

From The Beat: We believe you, that you have a strong heart. And now we want to know how you will harness that strength to build a better life for yourself, so you can stop having to be the "black sheep," and so you can be with your family where you belong.

My Grandma

I lose my mind every time someone talks about my dead grandma.

It seems like I black out and whatever happens happens. I done damn near beat a ninja to death for speakin' on her.

-Young Weezy

From The Beat: Next time you're about to flash like that — for any reason, really — ask yourself what would your grandma want you to do. She must have loved you so much to make an impression like this, and we'd bet that violence, either on another person or on yourself, is what she's want to see in you.

Rest In Peace

i wanna say rest in peace
to the homeboys
chuey and big foot
much love and respect

-Pelukas

From The Beat: We printed this out of respect for the memory of Chuey and Big Foot, but you disrespected our request that you tell us something about their lives and your relationship to them. If you can find no meaning in life but turf, your life will get worse.

Grandma's Sick

what keep me up at night
is my grandma
because she is sick
and i don't want nothing
to happen to her
but if something happens
i will be mad at everybody
and i am going to go bad
on all the people that talk shhh
and i just hope it go that way

-Demetrus

From The Beat: We know how deeply you love your grandma. We remember all the pieces you've written about that love. Now, God forbid her health fails, but if it does, how will it help for you to go bad and end up back in juvenile jail? Whatever happens next, you need to keep doing your best, so you can show up for your grandma and be the respectful, self-restrained young man she taught you to be.

This Game

BW: Tell us who you are Jakari.

J: My motivation is to get money.

BW: That's fair. We all need money to live on. What else is important to you?

J: Staying out of jail and not getting shot at in the streets.

BW: Have you lost a lot of friends to guns?

J: Yup. I lost like eight or nine friends in the drug war.

BW: How did that affect you? Did it put you deeper in the game or did you want out?

J: It made me stay true to the game, get more money and more girls.

BW: Truly, you didn't feel sad?

J: I felt sad. I felt hurt on the inside.

BW: Why did it make you true to the game?

J: Because if my ninjas were alive it'd be more complicated.

BW: Who have you lost due to turf/drugs?

J: It's a lot of people.

-Jakari

From The Beat: You don't need us to tell you that staying true to the game doesn't do anything for your dead friends or you, it just hurts your chances of living free. Honor your lost homies by making freedom your number one goal, not money. Honor your friends by going to school!

Up At Night Thinkin'

Thinkin' of my family and friends most of the time. And I think about me and what God have me on this world for, when all I do is get in jail. I do a lot of thinking at night about what I'm going to do when I'm going to be back out there with my family.

Me and my brother are in jail, and we're the oldest of the men in our family right now. We write each other from jail and talk about what we goin' do when we get out — that keeps me up at night. All the time thinkin' how my pop tried hard to keep me out of trouble — that's what keep me up at night.

-Kash Money

From The Beat: God did not put you here on this earth to make your money through crime, and you know that's what has you locked up doing time. Self-worth cannot be measured in dollars and cents, nor can money buy your freedom back if you're sent to the pen'. So with all this time to think and plan, what you gonna do when you're free again?

Stress Late, Then Wait For Visiting Day

what keeps me up at night
is me not knowin'
if my family and loved ones are safe
sometimes i lay on my bed
thinking of all crazy things that could happen to them
then i have to wait patiently until sat, sun
or wednesday to come up for staff to
come get me out my room and tell me i got a visit
then when i see my mom
all stress goes away knowin' that she's fine
and her telling me everybody doin' good
so that's one thing that keeps me up at night

-How J

From The Beat: Our minds play crazy tricks on us at night. But the lesson all that stressing might be teaching you, is that you need to make some changes in your life so that you can stay free, feel fine and do good, too — not just wait for Moms to come visit you.

I'm Moving

my life on the flats ain't really been the best
just got a hustla stressed
that's why i coped that toy and a vest
'cause i ain't really knowing when my time could be next
yep i'm tryin' a make it out the underworld
while other people playing wit it, thinkin' it's a game
till they be a victim to that flame
see i lost my dog to the struggle
— nope, it ain't been the same
i'm moving faster in the lane
so now it's harder to make a change
i'm having vision 'bout me catching three or four to the brain
but it's nothing 'cause how i'm leaving is how i came
a b-boy born to the struggle
a child of the ghetto
tryin' a survive by griping and toting that heavy metal

-Young Clyde

From The Beat: You're moving faster down the road to self-destruction, thinking that a vest and a gun are your best protection when all the while you're racing faster in the wrong direction. Yeah, in a way it gets harder to change, but not because of what you're saying. 'Cause everything you say here is a reason to get out fast, far, wide and clear — out the game for sure, and out the Bay if it's the only cure. Meanwhile toting that heavy metal just keeps you slaving for the devil who will cheat you and mistreat you till you're putting in work in the pen', talking 'bout how it's too late to change your life of sin. It's never too late — just begin! Day by day by day, struggle to win the battle within, for heavy-metal lies hold you in mental chains.

Still Wit' It

it hurt me deeply that you switched sides on me
we use to serve the same fiends
wear the same jeans
even bang the same team
but it's nothing cause i'm on mine, ya know
'cause these suckas want my life
and it's hell a crazy how i watch the whole squad fold
while i stack up g's, game locked and loaded
boy y'all know who kept it gangsta
hold it down from winter to winter
thirty-two in each lady
so that was sixty-four and a baby
i'm a young banga'
to this drama i'm no stranger
i'm use to it, also true to it
the game'a touch ya, look whatcha do to it
you faulty, you fake, you punk, you snake
how could you live wit' yo' self, haha
y'all thought it was over fo' the thugga young clyde
but i'm a gangsta 'till i die
and i'm flyer than i ever been
'bout fifty-five of them rubber bands
clore stones in my mouth, something nice on my right hand
getcha mind right boy, i'm a young man.

-Young Clyde

From The Beat: Welcome to max! Like so many, you're still stuck with twisting the facts. It's a like a fiend who needs to detox — you got as addicted to spittin' rocks as if you smoked 'em. And now you want to whine about someone you think snitched, but don't blame the player, blame the game, 'cause one way or another it always comes out the same. Yet you claim to stay true to the very game that just played you. You're still blinded by all the lies you believed in the street, now faced with the truth you write you're still a gangsta in the pages of The Beat. Honestly, no diss — but you've got to get over this. The game to which you swear allegiance is "faulty ... fake ... punk ... snake" — it's the game and its lies you need to shake! "Trust no one" is a rule of the game, but what you failed to see that it means your own brain! When you fell in love with the game, you played yourself, and it's a shame. Time to stop volunteering and start to get sane.

Jail, Prison and Death

Sometimes I wonder if the person they said we robbed will come testify and send me to CYA or even to San Quentin.

Now I wonder what it would be like there. I know my brotha told me some thangs about the pen', and it ain't no playground. Yet if that's my destiny, then, oh well. Still, I hope that's not a position I put myself in.

RIP Big Ed and Cricket. These were big homies from my block, people I saw growing up, with me lookin' up to them. They was all about thei' money. And these last couple of years I was seein' all the big homies gettin' shot or gettin' very long prison sentences — or even the death penalties.

But I just wanna say rest in paradise my ninjas, yo' lil' ninja, Barty, always have you in his heart.

-Barty

From The Beat: It's pretty clear that the big homies you admired when you were growing up, led you down the same path of self-destruction they walked. Love them and never forget them, but don't love the way of life they taught you, for it killed them. RIP

Thinking And Thinking Keeps Me Up At Night

What keeps me up sometimes is me thinking.

Thinking about how my family is feeling
about me being in the Hall.

What emotions is my mother going through.
I also think about God.

I can't stop thinking about females.
All the girls I had relationships with.

Have you ever lost your mind?
I never lost my mind.

Sometimes I wonder how it feels to be the world's richest man.

-Jason

From The Beat: How is your family feeling about your past choices? What is your mom going through with you detained? Well, we hope you do a better job handling your freedom when freedom comes a knockin'. What's your plan?

RIP

what it do man, this be Lil' Juanito
coming at y'all one time man
let me pay my respects to my deceased loved ones
these are my loved ones that passed on
and are in a better place
y'all will never be forgotten
i mourn y'all death every night
but we all have our share of memories in mind
memories that will never be forgotten.
r i p o.g. bo, simp, gimp, payaso, and big-head jesse

-Lil' Juanito

From The Beat: We keep trying to get you to see that the dying you grieve comes from the war you in which you believe. End the war with peace, and the dying will cease — plus you stay free.

RIP Marv

My ninja got killed at the age of twenty-two years. He was a real ninja! Always see who is the real before someone that try to mess with him, and that's what I respect about him. And he is a lot like me — real. Know who real.

-Travis

From The Beat: Yes, but real is only half of it. 'Cause too many real ninjas will lead you to an early grave or to a life sentence. We need real ninjas with a will to change how they live life.

Rest In Peace Temellia

In the 2002, my cousin Temellia
C. died
She got shot seven times.
All because people be hating.

-Billitant

From The Beat: We're so sorry your cousin had to die... we don't want to see you joining her, and that's why we put so much pressure on you to change your life around. You know that, right you?

RIP Granny

what keep' me up at night
thinking about my granny
she passed away
and i think about her all night everyday
i lost my mind when my granny died
and we sold our house
r i p granny

-Walter

From The Beat: There will be no more terrible time in your life, than when your granny died and the family home was sold outright. And yet your granny still from her rest in paradise, watches over you by day and offers you her best advice in your dreams each night. Yesterday is gone but her love for you lives on.

RIP Dirty Mike

Rest in peace to the big homie Dirty Mike. You gone but you'll never be forgotten, and that's on my mama. Man, Bra, I wish you was still here with me so we could sit up, blow hella grapes and play war games on the X-box.

The same day I ran from the group home, my lil bra told me, and on the real tip I had to shed some tears for da homie. It ain't gone never be another dirt McGurt. Damn, when I think about chu I remember you always telling us how you took the boys on and got away, or showed us those big-boy cannons. And even the best advice you gave me: "Stay in school" and give the game up 'cause ain't nothing out here for me except death and jail.

I love you Dirt and all da homies do too. Say wassup to Pac and B.I.G. for me 'cause I know for a fact you in Thugs Mansion.

RIP Dirty Mike.

-Reese-C-Cup B4

From The Beat: We hate to read these tragic stories of loss, and we read them in every issue of *The Beat*! Just remember, RCC, even though your homie was smart enough to stay out of the reach of the cops and to give you some of the best advice we've read, he wasn't able to stay alive! That puts an extra burden on you to do just that so that your promise of keeping his memory alive will be a long one. We believe you've already figured out that the best way to show your respect to Mike is to follow that excellent advice he gave you to stay in school and give up the game!

To Da Beat

Yeah, you know I been gone for a minute, but I'm baaaack! Not out of this B5 but from your pages. Well, ever since I ran from the Ranch an' came back (four days later), I been on split with some people, so therefore I haven't written nothing to ya', only a couple of times. But my wok only made it one time to your pages. What happened to the rest? Who knows? But right now, I'm hitting you with extreme love.

I'm writing the events of my last day, Visit to Hell, Cold World, and this little note. I hope you know that I wrote all this from my cage 'cause this last month I've been on BMP, so I hope that I hit the POW! So one love to The Beat. I hope ya doin' good.

I wanna give a shout out to the lady that goes to the Ranch. I know her name but I don't know how to spell it. I miss working with you. You helped me a lot. For that and your friendship I am grateful for that.

-Lil' Lazy B5

From The Beat: Thanks for the kind words about The Beat and about Pauline (the facilitator whose name you don't know how to spell.) We're curious to know why you ran from the Ranch? What didn't you like about that program? We're also sorry not all of your pieces have made it into these pages, but some things are just not Beat appropriate (like your last page of shout outs and sex for drugs scenario... We also didn't print "Visit To Hell" because of its graphic violence and gunplay... But since you got two POWs and one CO-POW, somehow we don't think you'll be too upset by what we didn't print...)

Feeling Sad

Well, the way I feel is sad. I am feeling very poor because I am not around my family and friends or my loved ones. I want to get up out of here and see my mom and dad, 'cause every night I cry thinking about my mom. I just can't wait. When I get out, I can see my family and talk to 'em.

-Demarcus B4

From The Beat: It is very hard, especially at your age, to be ripped away from your mom and family, so we can understand why it causes you to cry. We hope when you get out that you remember how much you missed them, so that you will think twice (or more) before doing the things that give the system the power to take you away.

Wondering

Sometimes I wonder how my future is going to be. I hope it would be successful, and I don't end up in prison 'cause that's the way I'm headed. The reason is because when the time comes it will be too late to do the stuff you wanted to do before you turned into a adult. And right now I have time to change, especially since I'm going to Glen Mills. I'll have a long time to change.

-Sleepy B4

From The Beat: It's pretty obvious that you want to change and give yourself a better future than what you've prepared yourself for so far. And it is that desire to change that gives us confidence in your future. Glen Mills is a good program, but no program can work if you're not willing to work with it. So we want to encourage you to keep that mindset for change active and growing, and to get the most out of this program that you can. And good luck.

Released And Returned

Sometimes I wonder what I'm thinking when I'm doing half the shhhh that puts me right back in here. Like, I was just released out of custody about two months ago. I was supposed to go to adult Walden House for one year, but I had a guardian angel looking over me, and I was released to my dad. So I was on the straight and narrow doing what I was supposed to do.

I moved out the city and in with my gramma. I got a job and bought a car. But I was coming back to the city once in a while. On my trips back to the city, I wouldn't make the right decisions. So I'm paying the price now, and instead of a one year rehab, I'm doing two years rehab. Now I'm wondering what was I thinking...

-John

From The Beat: It seems pretty clear that you weren't thinking at all! One of the hardest things for young people to do is to connect the dots between what they do today and what happens tomorrow. You wanted to do things that you shouldn't have been doing, so you just did them because you wanted to. Now that you're paying the price for those things you wanted to do, you don't want to pay it. That's understandable, but won't get you out from under these consequences. There's only one way to do that, and that's to avoid the consequences in the first place. You know how to do that, but only time will tell if you put that knowledge to use.

RIP Relfino

I wanna say RIP Relfino. He was a good person even though people say he got a little hyphy. But he still let me know what I was supposed to know. He taught me from bad to bad to doing it right. Him being up there really put me down!

-Lil' Chicano B4

From The Beat: It's terrible to read about all the deaths among the young in the Bay Area! This shouldn't be happening! If you can't change the big picture (and we don't know how you can), then see if you can change the little picture, which is you and your own actions. Keep Relfino alive in your mind by keeping yourself alive for a very long time!

This One Time (Part 2)

Another time I was just chilling with my brother in front of the house and we were bored so we took the neighbor's car and went to Pacifica to chill with some females. When we got there it was about 10 p.m. on a Wednesday. We went to their school and chilled on the roof, until about 1 a.m. We got in the car and drove back to the house, chilled, smoked, and drank, had a good time, and this was another time.

-Lil' Shadow B4

From The Beat: We're glad this evening of fun ended without trouble, but the fun you had was a child's fun and that's because you acted like you were the center of the universe and nobody else mattered. If your neighbor had decided to go out, or if an emergency had come up where he needed his car, then what? If you had a car and somebody took it because they were bored, would you say, "Oh well, they're just boys and, after all, they were bored." We don't think so.

Sometimes I Wonder

What it do Beat? This ya boy M Beezy. Whoever reading this know who I am and where I be, so what it do. But sometimes I wonder to myself how can I get free from the system, free from group homes and free from the PO. But feel me, sometimes I wonder if the people I be with is doing good and if the thugs on the block is stayin' up and livin' like a boss, because no mater where I go, I wonder about my real thugs and how they're livin' while another real boss like me is down. But I'm still here. The block is in me. Get at me.

-M Beezy B4

From The Beat: When will a "real boss" like you wake up to the fact that all you're doing is putting money repeatedly into the system's pockets and answering repeatedly to a bunch of strangers (acting like bosses) who tell you what to do and when to do it? We've heard you say that you are tired of this in-and-out existence, and we would be, too. But if you keep your mind on your "thugs" and wear your pride like medal ("The block is in me..."), we think you're going to get a lot more tired of this existence. Your choices are all hard ones, so we want to encourage you to take the long view... Where do you want to be in five years, and what do you see as the most likely path to get there?

Sometimes I Wonder

Sometimes I wonder what I could've did different from avoiding getting chased by the narcs. Sometimes I wonder if I would've made quick left instead of making a right I would've been out been out tonight doin' what I do and gettin' money, ya heard me.

But you sometimes I wonder could a ninja really make it in this dope game, or get a job and get a lil' piece of pocket change? Sometimes a wonder if I'ma live to be 18. Sometimes I wonder is the DA gone play me. Sometimes I wonder, man, a ninja really got to get out of YGC.

-Dimaryea B5

From The Beat: Why not try a little experiment. Try getting a job for a little pocket change and see if that isn't a better plan of action than the one that leads you to losing your freedom. That way you won't have to wonder, you will know. You say you think about being on the outs doing what you do, but it seems to us that what you do is get yourself locked up where you are stacking nothing but some other boy's draw's. Think about it.

Catch

Why do we play catch with our lives, allow our lives to get thrown back and forth? Which city will catch us next? Or will we even make it to see the next move we make? Only you can answer these questions.

Only you...

-Ro Buttah Tha Ethay B4

From The Beat: Actually, only YOU can answer these questions...

What Keep You Up At Night

What's up Beat? It's your boy J-Stub. and the thing that keep me up at night is my wife. I think about the things I put her through while I'm in here 'cause I wanted to be running the streets with my boys. Now look! I'm away from her and them. But one thing, I don't have to worry about nothing 'cause she holding me down the best she can until I get home.

-J-Stubba B4

From The Beat: It sounds like you owe this special person quite a bit. (Would you have stayed true to her if she had put something above her love for you and allowed herself to be taken away?) Your "boys" will always take you from her, so it's up to you to be responsible when you get home, and find a way to stay home!

Rest In Peace

Man, I don't even know were to start from 'cause a ninja done lost hella homies to this game. It ain't even funny man. I just want to start off by saying my ninja Money-B. He was like a big brother to me. He always kept a ninja on game, and always told me, "Get money lil' bra, if that's the only thing you do! Get money!"

And when I heard he got killed, I knew I was gone have to be careful 'cause he always looked out for me. Now that he gone, only thing I can do is reminisce.

And for my ninjas Rell, Wagga, and Marcus, we was tight like two shoe strings tied together. We did hella shhh together — smoked, drank, got at females and all the shhh. Man, I miss all my ninja fo' real, it ain't even funny. But all I can do is keep it pushin', shake all hatas, an keep pushin' that line on them suckas and stackin' dip, ya heard me.

-Ham B5

From The Beat: Yeah, we heard you, but we're not convinced that you heard yourself! How terrible to have four close friends all die when they were still children! It shouldn't be that way. Read carefully what you've written. Your homie Money-B taught you to get your money, but he's gone from the earth and you're gone from the block! That's where his teaching has led you both! You say all you can do is keep stackin', but what are you stackin' — and for whom? Who is getting rich off your schemes? It doesn't appear like you are, since you now sleep on a metal bunk in a tiny room, taking showers with other boys and answering to a bunch of strangers (who thank you and your friends for giving them such well-paying jobs) telling you what to do every minute of the day. If you knew that the lifestyle you say you're down for would lead you to the same end as the homies you write about here, would you have the strength and courage to change anything about how you live?

Things That Keep Me Up At Night

The things that keep me up at night? It's a lot of things that keep me up at night, starting with the fact that I gotta lay it down at nine o'clock. Even though I get under the covers and close my eyes, the thoughts in my head do not allow me to go to sleep — thoughts like tha times I had with girls, with the homeys, and thoughts of my freedom, period.

The things that keep me up the most is that I could have easily avoided coming here.

-Tha Kid

From The Beat: Do you mean you could have avoided coming here by not doing whatever it was that gave the system the power to bring you here? Does that mean there will be some changes in your life when you get out of here? Like what?

Worries Of Family Keep Me Up At Night

Damn man, when I lay down, I think I'm about to just fall asleep, but I start to think about a lot of things like my mom, 'cause I know she stressin' about her oldest son being locked down and not knowing how long he's going to be gone.

I also think about my big sis. I hope she's ok out there. She's like my other half and I care about her so much. I wonder how long I'm gonna to be gone because I don't want my daughter to grow up without me around.

I think about my girl (wifey) 'cause I love her like I been with her my whole life. I think about my little brothers because I know they wonder about me and miss me. I just pray and hope I go home soon so I won't have to worry, and so I can finally get a good night sleep.

Good night everybody.

-Big Bill B5

From The Beat: You have a lot on your mind. When you think about going back with your family and your girl, do you see yourself making any changes in the way you live? Are you planning to stop doing whatever it was that brought you here, or do you think you can get by if you're slicker? Think about your mom, your little brothers, your girl and your daughter, and find a way to stay free.

RIP Trucho

What it do Beat readers? How's it going? As for me, it's cool. Just chillin' up in Max. Well on the topic about RIPs, This is a letter to my homie:

3-9-04 was the last time we kicked it, homie. Damn dawg, only 17 years old taken out the game. It's a trip, homie, how time goes by. It seems like only yesterday we were on the block, kickin' it and smashing on rivals, tu sabes que onda (you know what was going on) homie. Well, how's that new vida treating you up there? Ten un espacio listo para mi que en unas cuantas decadas llego por alli homie, so ponte trucha. Bueno homie, te dejo ir, porque como puedes ver estoy torcido. (Keep a place ready for me 'cause in a few decades I'll get there, so keep it real. Okay, homie, I have to go because as you can see I'm locked up.)

I love you homie, ay te wacho (see you later). Till next time homie, keep watching over me. Tu homie Goofy se despidie (singing off).

-Goofy B5

From The Beat: We hate to read these pieces, Goofy. To us they represent a continuing tragedy — and part of the tragedy is that the death of people as young as 17 doesn't make enough of you want to change the course of your life so that it stretches out before you as it should. We admire you for keeping this piece about your friend and your friendship, and not about "enemies" and revenge. You have a child, Goofy, so it's time to put your house in order. Will that be easy? No. Is it necessary? Yes.

The Beat Within's "Rest In Peace" Issue

Man, this one of the issues you could keep going on and on about, 'bout homies and family members that passed away. But first off I would like to say rest in peace to my auntie that passed away from cancer. She been there with me through thick and thin, stop moms from whoopin' me when I was younger and everything.

Next is the homie Wag, just turned 16, got shot and killed over some shhhh he wasn't in, at the wrong place at the wrong time; died right in my face and I couldn't do nothing.

Then the Rell got killed and we was just at school playin' basketball and he asked me what time the party was and I told him. He came. I introduced him to moms. Then 30 minutes later I hear gun shots and he was in the car in my face fighting for his life.

Last, my bra Marc (aka Nitro) got shot in killed while I was here. That shhhh made me go hella crazy. I came in here April 20 and he died April 30th. The shady thing about it is he wrote me five days before he got killed telling me hella shhhh about everything. Told me to keep ma head up and be coo' and knock the time out. Now only thing I cold remember about him was memories and a lot pictures of us in my file goin' to Vegas, on the block wit homies, hella pictures with our females and other females.

One of us had to get killed so we could look at life and ask, "Do I wanna go that route?" But until then, Rest In Peace to the homies.

-Al-Bundy B5

From The Beat: The last question you posed in this sad remembrance of lost friends lifts this RIP piece above the average. We're sure you don't want to go the route that ends in violent death, so what are you doing or planning to do that will change that outcome for you? The fact that all these people (except for your aunt) died in their youth is a crime in itself, and one that no other country in the western world experiences. Why do you think that is? What do you think can be done to change it?

What Keeps You Up At Night

What it do Beat? This ya boy Bundy sliding through, 'bout to tell y'all what keeps me up at night in B-5. It's these ninjas that's in here keep me up at night kicking on doors all night, talking hella shhhh off they door, being a window warrior, then come out and act like shhhh all gravy, talkin' 'bout', "Bra, I was just playin'."

When you got somethin' really serious on yo' mind, it keeps you up during the night thinking hella much. Then I be like, "Damn, I hope the homies safe right now 'cause a lot ninjas droppin'," ya heard. The most important one is my family for their safety, 'cause bullets ain't got no names on them.

-Al-Bundy B5

From The Beat: It's ironic that you are kept up at night by the selfish behavior of those who can think of nothing and non one but themselves and their desires. The irony is that sometimes on the outs, the things people do, including you and your friends, can be similar... not thinking about how their actions affect other people because they are only thinking about what they want, and no one else. Those that bang on their doors and keep you up at night have not made the transition from childhood to young adulthood — the very same transition that all of you have to make on the outs if you hope to find a way of living in health and in freedom.

Sometime I wonder...

Sometimes when I am at the Ranch, it makes me wonder what if I had lost a week and had to stay there for one more week. I also wonder what if they send me to CYA. Would I kill myself or knock the time out?

And man, to keep it real, I think it really would be harder. But damn, God blessed me by sending my to Log Cabin Ranch and I still wonder what if I was locked for more than ten months? Would I still be the same person, or would I have gone crazy kid?

I'm out. Next week.

-Young Money B5

From The Beat: Of course you wouldn't kill yourself if they sent you to the Y. Why would you? Whether it's here, the Ranch or the Y, you will be walking out, so we hope you spend a little time wondering what you're going to do when you get out of here so that you won't have to come back and go crazy.

Don't Want To Go To Hell

What keeps me up at night is thing about all the time I'm spending in juvenile hall, and thinking about my family on the outs. Worrying about who's going to die next on the streets, if it's going to be one of my friends or cousins.

But what really keeps me up at night is thinking about what I did on the outs that I could have prevented from happening to get me where I am now. I go crazy thinking about the time I'm spending for just a little crime. I rather suffer in jail then hurt someone on the streets and suffer in hell.

-Young Leem B5

From The Beat: Which do you regret more, doing what you did to get in here or just getting in here? In other words, if you could have done what you did without paying this heavy price, would you do it? What will this time of suffering in jail change about the way you live your life when you walk out of here? What are you going to do to live the life that God put on earth for?

What Keeps Me Up At Night

Everything goes through my mind at night. It doesn't too much bother me besides the fact that it does keep me up, even though I'm sleepy. My past, my family, my future always keeps me up to the point if I don't speak on what I'm thinking about I won't go to sleep.

So I don't call myself crazy because I talk on what I'm feeling because I know that's what really helps me sleep. I know that's what really helps me sleep. It does hurt sometimes because I been through so much that I think back and cry. That also helps because it's letting stuff go in my heart that I know I have to let go because it's the past.

-Kk GU

From The Beat: "What doesn't kill you will only make you stronger" definitely applies to you. Sometimes, tears are the most appropriate response to what's going on in our lives. But the same pain that causes those tears is what we can learn from and grow from. Writing your feeling down like what you did today also help. When you benefit from talking out these problems, who do you talk them out with? Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us.

Every Now And Then

Sometimes I wonder
What will happen next in my life
As I'm sittin' here writin'
The thoughts in my life,

It sometimes feel I'm always alone
even when someone seems to be home,
Sometimes I wonder will I make out here in this
wild and crazy world

Feeling like a depressed curious girl.
Sometimes I wonder why I'm really here and what's
my purpose in like everywhere.
Sometimes I feel I don't know myself and it's better
off I'm left on the shelf.

While I wonder about more and more I'm still
learning about what I have in store.
I have to stop wondering and just find out
Then I won't have to ask or doubt.

-Roast Beef GU

From The Beat: There's nothing wrong with wondering. If you don't ask, then you won't learn. Many things are learnt from asking questions and out of curiosity. The wonderful thing about learning (which comes with being curious and asking questions) is that it never ends. There is always more to learn.

RIP Monte

Rest in peace to my father figure.
Damn! Why did whoever it was pull the trigger?
Man, you left without reason,

Now I'm missing you every season.
You didn't even get to live to see your kids grow old!
You corpse lies there without a soul!

Man, I will never forget what you taught me!
You really taught me a lot about life.
You really put me up on game.

And I'm still sitting here like man your murder is
really a shame.
RIP Monte

-Lil' Tiff GU

From The Beat: It's so sad for us to read all these tragic stories about the death of young people who should have had decades more of life to live! What are some of the things that Monte taught you about life? If he could come back today and give you some advice from inside juvenile hall, what do you think he would advise you?

Cursed Since Birth

I've been goin crazy for a minute since I've been cast
down to hell
But I ain't trippin' incarceration you could probably tell
Cursed since birth, the one to end.

-Ben B4

From The Beat: Could that "cursed since birth" belief simply be a way of not having to take responsibility for the changes you know you have to make in your life? 'Cause if you were really cursed, then nothing you could do would change the picture. Is that what you believe?

Almost Lost My Mind

On the outs I haven't really lost my mind, but in here I can say I went to almost losing my mind. It's bad enough being in here. You lose your privileges of doing what you want, and when you get into trouble and have to stay in your room it drives me crazy.

I got so much on my mind that I follow the rules and do what they say just so I can get my privileges. That's what takes my mind off of other things like hard life. And when my mind lose it, I really lost it! I cry and I cry, because I really feel as if my heart is hurt and it really does hurt me when I have to do what people say and I know there ain't nothing I can do. Not to the point where I wanna hurt myself and not even the people who punished me, but I feel like I need to take my literal "heart pain" out on some thing.

-Kk GU

From The Beat: We know what you mean. Try putting your feelings on paper whenever you feel like "losing it," and if you don't want to share it with others, you can always crumble it up and throw it away. However, we encourage you to share it with us so others can learn from it and know that they (and you) are not alone in this world of "hard life." Also, there is nothing wrong with crying. We wish more boys would do it so they wouldn't have to bottle up all those negative emotions.

RIP Lover

My beautiful angel, why you had to leave me down here with these fake people saying that they love me and care Unlike you, I know you always gone be there looking at me and over me. I'ma never forget the way we used to be outside, chillin' like two birds in the sky.

When you left me, I was like it couldn't be, not my lover, the one who was with me to the end. Next day, I went to get yo' name on my arm. That's how you know I got mad love to my Number One. I miss you so much I don't know what to do.

These haters down here be on some other, but as you would say, forget 'em all. Show no love to the haters but sometimes make 'em yo' best friend. But I'm not doing the same without ya. It's like you left me unattended with no line. I think like you couldn't said bye, but God needed another beautiful angel like you to watch me, and he picked you, the right one for me. I can dig it. Ha ha, bra bras. I love you Gerrehh, my number one ninja, as you say.

RIP Gerrehh Lamar White.

-Starr GU

From The Beat: Were you locked up when this tragedy happened? If so, why did you let yourself be taken away from the man you love by doing something that you apparently loved even more (since you risked losing him)? We're so sorry that he's lost his life, and we hope it encourages you to make some changes in yours. Keep his memory alive by staying alive (and free) yourself!

Sometimes I wonder

Sometimes I wonder why me. Why I am going crazy, losing my mind? You know why, because I don't have nobody by my side, like my family. they outside. While I am outside they don't care so why should I?

Now I am here they want to be by my side. But now on one. I was all alone and they want to be my friend. But never will I need them because I am bigger than what it is. So they need to step there game up.

Why I am I going crazy and losing my mind? Because I am here, don't know what they going to do with me. Should they send me way or let me go free and do me and be what I want to be?

-Shelly GU

From The Beat: Are you saying that because your family doesn't care about you, you shouldn't care either? We don't understand that reasoning at all. In fact, it seems to us that if you don't have people in your corner caring about you, then it's even more important that you are in your own corner caring about yourself! Everyone needs some kind of support. If you can't find it in your family, maybe you can find it from your friends — but not the "friends" who lead you here.

The One I Love: Ma Granny

I sit in ma room looking at four walls and I'm upset because the predicament that I'm in and it's bullshhh. When I get ma phone call I talk to my granny, then get happy. She say she's gonna come see me, then end up not, and ma heart is broken. But then I realize that it's not her fault, it mine. I still love her 'cause she's always there for me. I love ma granny.

-Monay GU

From The Beat: We're glad you have someone as wonderful as your granny in your life. When you think about your own responsibility for your separation, do you plan to change anything when you get back together with her? What?

Rest In Peace!

My ninja posted in the jets
Takin' a fat blunt to the neck
With the thang tucked and fully loaded
3:00 in the morning
And he talkin' on the phone
Wishin' a ninja would slide through
When three masked murderers take his life
And leave twelve or thirteen holes in his body
As he lies on the ground
Taking his last breath
And spittin' up blood
I just tell him
Rest in peace, John
We gone come back

-Mike B1

From The Beat: We're sorry your homie got killed (as we're sorry every time we read that another young man or woman has paid the ultimate price for the lifestyle they chose). Instead of vowing to "come back," we wish you would see this murder for what it is — a deadly game of murder, revenge, more revenge and more murder, leaving an entire generation crippled and trying to find their way. We wish you would see John's death as a call to change directions, not to seek revenge but to seek to become a better human being doing things that benefit rather than destroy the neighborhood. Without that change, you are prescribing a future for yourself that you will almost certainly regret down the line, one

At A Young Age

At the age below fifteen I was sent to the halls
Now I'm in my room looking at these four walls
Waiting for tonight so you can get my phone call
Now it's rec time and I'm sitting at a table
Looking at a TV that ain't got no damn cable
They got me walking around with some purple khakis

And some funk up slippers
Next time you know, I turned around and seen
a ripper

At the age of 15, yeah, I'm still up in the halls
Waiting for my release so I can play some basketball

Funk volleyball that shhh hella booty
Next thing I know he beggin' like a fiend
Couple of months later I committed an assault
Came back to court they said it was my fault
I said, "Forget you judge and forget you DA!
Y'all might as well send me to Y.A!"

-Lil' Freak

From The Beat: Wake up, Lil' Freak. You can yell "Forget you" to the DA and judge till the end of time, but it won't change the fact that you have no control over their lives and they have complete control over yours! (If you doubt that, try walking out of here...) Be careful what you wish for, because you might get it. We know too many people that have been through the CYA system who have learned from their first-hand experience that the Y is not a place you — or anyone — wants to be. It's clear to us that you need to add some maturity that matches your years, because we're afraid that if you don't, you'll be maturing in a far more structured, far more oppressive environment than YGC, writing pieces that begin "If only..." and "I wish...."

RIP To Money Maine

Rest in peace to Money Maine. He was nineteen years old and he was shot by some sucka-ass ninjas that was hatin', 'cause he was shining on all of 'em, but you feel me?

RIP to Tay. He was shot at a rec center. He was in jail for most of his life for stuff on the block and he had got out an' changed his life around, an' people was still hating, so they shot him.

-Metro B1

From The Beat: We removed one line of this tribute, because it was a threat to get even which not only violates Beat standards but tells us — and everyone reading this piece — that you are not yet ready for freedom. The loss of these two young men is enough of a tragedy without you adding to it by causing other mother to grieve for the loss of their sons, including your own mother!

Stress Keeps Me Up

What keep me up is stress. I think about a lot of shhh — my case, my ninja case. I can't sleep at night. I do sometimes, but I would be up at 3:00 a.m., thinking of if I was out and what I be doing. Sometimes I wonder if I can just start all over and be smarter about what I did.

-P Rush B1

From The Beat: Would it be enough to give you a good night's sleep if you were out of here, or would you also need to change some of the ways you live when you're on the outs so that you can sleep peacefully? When you are awake in the middle of the night thinking about what you'd be doing on the outs, what things are you thinking about doing? If you could start the day you messed up over again? If you were out, what would you be doing? If you think you can keep doing the same stuff that brought you here by doing it "smarter," then we'll just have to wait for you to do a little more growing up, 'cause what you need is to act a little older...

Y'all Took A Part Of Me

RIP OG and Bay. I miss y'all so much. I don't know what to do. When y'all left me, y'all took a part of me. OG, you know how we was, bra. I miss you. Love you. Never forget you, lil' bra.

Bay, you was a crazy man — always had a smile on yo' face and always come see what up wit' me. Come get an' do some. But now we can't, but one day we will. I see you when I get there. Love you, Bay-Bay. One love.

-Dd B1

From The Beat: We don't want you to add to the tragic deaths of your friends by joining them any time soon. There is enough death on these streets already. What can you do both to keep their memories alive, and to keep yourself safe and free? Did their deaths or your being locked up make you want to change anything about the way you live your life?

All The People I Have And Almost Lost

Well, I would like to talk about all of the people that I have lost and almost lost in my life. I want to talk about all of my loved ones, because a lot of them I grew up with and they're just dying by the dozens and they are impacting my life, because that's less people for me to be able to hang out with.

And if all of my friends and family continue to be killed in the streets, I feel like either I'm going to have to take action or not hang out any more, and I love to hang out, so there isn't going to be too much of that being in the house.

-Phillip B1

From The Beat: When you say you feel like you might have to take action, are you talking about the kind of action that leads to more mothers crying, more boys dying, and more slave time for you? If so, we hope you can put that kind of thinking out of your head. It's the kind of little boy thinking that leads to terrible dead ends in life for which there is nothing left but regret. If you can't convince others to protect themselves by avoiding the beef and block, can you at least keep yourself safe by avoiding the danger zones? After losing the number of friends and homies that have paid with their lives, don't you want to keep their memories alive by living yourself? Besides the impact of having fewer people to play with, has there been any other kind of impact on how you want to live your life?

If My Big Bra Didn't Die...

Sometimes I wonder what it would be like if big bra didn't die. Would I be the same, in and out of jail, like I am? Would I be hittin' licks and runnin' around wit' the cannon? I don't know if he would try to keep me out of trouble or help me get into it. I guess I will never know, 'cause the time ain't come, but I will find out when I get to the kingdom up above.

-Young Ant B1

From The Beat: We're sorry you didn't have the benefit of your brother guiding you along better paths than the ones you've been traveling. But now you have to think for yourself, Young Ant. You know what gets you in trouble, which is another way of saying you know what you have to stop doing in order to stay out of trouble. But knowing is not the same as doing. If it's between continuing your old life or holding onto freedom, you can't have both. Which one are you going to choose — or allow to choose you?

Can't Wait

Wa's poppin' Beat? Y'all ask me what keep me up at night. What really keep me up at night is thinkin' 'bout my dead homies and my situation. I can't wait to get out dis place, and I'm really not tryin' to see the new juvenile hall.

-D-Da B2

From The Beat: Of course you're not trying to see the inside of the new hall, who is? But you've got to do better than that... You've got to try not to see the inside of the new hall. Can you see the difference between not trying to get locked up and trying not to get locked up?

What Keeps Me Up

The cold air and just by being in that room. And when I think about my girl I go crazy. And when I think about my mom and my brother, man, I miss them hella much. Man, when I think about my sister, rest in peace.

-Randy B2

From The Beat: It's easy for us to understand how you could lose it in here. But there's only thing you can do to avoid these feelings, and that's to avoid coming to the hall in the first place! We know you didn't have time to write about your sister, but we're interested in what happened to her.

RIP Lil' D

What's good Beat? My name is young Flat Head, and I want to tell you about my big bra Lil' D. First off I would like to say I really miss my bra Lil' D. He was 21 years old when he got killed out there. Man, I was in a group home when he died. When my grandma told me, I was so mad when she told me.

When I went to the funeral, my lil' cousin said, "Is my daddy going to be OK?" I said, "Yes, but he is not going to be here when you get older. You all was going to have me and mom, OK?"

But I got to go. RIP Lil' D. We will always have you in my heart.

-Flat Head B5

From The Beat: We're sorry you lost your good friend, Flat Head. We hope you are not doing any of the things that lead to such terrible stories like this. What do you plan to do to keep Lil' D's memory alive for a very long time?

Rest In Peace, Grandma

RIP Grandma

You are my heart and soul. It hurt me so much when you died and went home to God where you belong, so watch over me, your oldest grandson, and be my guardian angel. Lead me on the right track 'cause the route I'm on is not where it's at.

I am in a hole, Grandma, so help me out. I'm sinking like quicksand, and it's no way out. So can you and God help a brother out in desperate need that's looking at years? That's not me, so please ask God to set me free and give me one more chance 'cause that's all I need. Till we meet again, I love you with all my heart. I want you to know that I love you, Grandma.

-Berty B5

From The Beat: If God gave you that "one more chance" you're asking for, how would you use it? Have you had chances before? How did you use them? On what basis can God judge that this time you would use your freedom wisely, without hurting anyone or doing dirt? If your loving Grandma could sit with you and listen to your desperate prayer, what do you think she would answer? What would she tell you to do for yourself to make it easier for her both to watch over you and to persuade God to cut you some slack?

Hot Boy

What it do Beat? This be that vato Cartoon from San Francisco. I just had court today. The judge said I'm going to CYA. I ain't trippin'. I'ma do this tiempo and go back to my family, and of course the 'hood. This time I get out, I'ma do shhh smarter. I'm not talkin' 'bout flippin' the script, forget that. Doin' shhh on da down low it's gonna be hard 'cause I'm Hot Boy! Bein' locked up I realize being a hot boy got my ass locked up and going to CYA.

Well, I gotta go. To all locked, keep your head up. One love. Late.

-Cartoon B5

From The Beat: We know you won't listen to this because you're still thinking like a boy (hot or not), but when we hear that someone is planning to continue the life that got him locked up, but plans to be slicker about it, we know there's more down time in your future. We also believe that sooner or later, your thinking will mature to the degree that you will see how much time you are wasting when you could be doing things to benefit your future, like going to school... If you go to YA, we hope you can stay out of the beef because every fight you have will add six months to your time.

RIP Cousin Monte, Ant

Monte really was not in beef with no one, but he was from a set. Monte loved having fun, and smokin'. Monte was my favorite cousin and like a best friend to everyone. Losing Monte was a hard thing and letting him go was harder.

Ma ninja Ant was a dope boy. He was about his money and poppin' pills. Ant was in beef but his killing was a mistake. They were looking for someone else.

-Mookey B2

From The Beat: We're sorry about this untimely death, just as we are sorry every week when we read these tragic RIPs. If it makes you feel any better, you are not the only Beat writer who has dedicated a piece to Monte or to Ant. Ant's death is another terrible thing that should never have occurred. Do their deaths make you understand the value of your own life, and that there are things you can do to put it in jeopardy and other things you can do to reduce the danger? Because if you just live the same way that Ant did, you're putting your life at risk!

Missing My Fun

What keeps me up at night is when I'm thinking how much fun I could be having on the outs while in here. Also I think about how I could change because I can't do this no more. I can't keep coming back and forth here. I stress a lot and I know my family is stressing with me being in here.

I be thinking what I'm go do when I get out, how am I go change, and do I really want to change. Also what keep me up at night is me thinking about me knowing her, and when I go get out and what I'm missing and what I could be doing right now while I'm sitting in here stressin'.

-Gf B2

From The Beat: If you don't know if you want to change or not, then you probably will have a few more trips back to this place to help you decide... What we're trying to say is that we think you really do want to change but are afraid of the unknown. But we hope you focus on what you know: that the choices you've been making lead you jail (and could lead you to even worse consequences), and those choices will always lead you to a bad end. So for dealing with stress, the best advice we can give is to stop doing the things that bring you stress, which are also the things that bring you here...

Being Here Keeps Me Up

What keeps me up at night? My family because I hate to see my mom and pops see me in here, and I know they be tired of comin' in here. And just being in here! Like in my room... can't believe dat I'm back in here. Dat's what keep me up. Also them four walls I be lookin' at.

I been up in here for like four weeks. It feel like four years because time in here go by slow. And now when I'm up in here, I be worry about my lil' bras dat be out roamin' da streets. Like if you in here and yo' grandma pass away and you got to go in handcuffs wit' the uniform on. I really be thinkin' about stuff like dat. Dat's why I try my best to stay out of YGC, but it's really hard when you on probation.

-Jeremiah B2

From The Beat: So, which is harder Jeremiah, staying true to the terms of your probation or being in here? It seems like when you're out there, the hardest thing is not to violate your probation, but once you're in here the hardest thing is being in here! You're going to have to make some tough decisions. Are the sacrifices probation requires you to make worth doing if they keep you free? We think so, but that's your decision to make. What is the hardest thing about being on probation? What do you need the most help with? Are you looking for that help? Where? From whom?

RIP Ruben

Ey Beat, this ya boy Twon and I'm about to put you on game about my cousin Ruben. He was a good person on some for real for real shhh. But he had a lot of enemies dat didn't like him. But my cousin was still eating and like, "Forget all haters." But my cousin knew he was go die, so he posted on the block. But anyways, ninjas didn't like him 'cause he had hella girls and he had hella money on his head. So like I tell ninjas, respect it or accept it or get stripped butt naked. Rest in paradise to my cousin and I'm outtro.

-Twon B2

From The Beat: Did Ruben lose his life because he had girls and money, or for other reasons? We hope you look at his death more closely and try to apply the lessons from it to your own life. Are you contributing to the deadly violence in the 'hood, or are you trying to find another way for yourself? We hope so. We don't want to read someone else's RIP to you...

Rest In Peace

Man, I miss my dog
All da' block huggin' midnite club
Poppin' man I miss you D-Tro

The block ain't the same
The thugs miss callin' your name
Will we in the dice game

Man, I miss my dog
You was my brother

A man I respected, I looked up
Man, I wish I could kill dude

Dat' killed you

Man, I miss you, big bra.

-G-Thang B2

From The Beat: We are going to be blunt with you. Your "big bra" D-Tro is not feeling any pain at all. But you are. And now you dream about giving that same pain, not to the person who did this thing (because, just like D-Tro, if he is gone he will also feel nothing), but to a crying mother, a little brother, a loving friend. It's those that are left behind who have to bear the pain and shed the tears. As long as you think like this, how will the cycle of death for death ever end?

RIP

I would like to say rest in peace to my great grandma. I really miss her. When she was around I felt like I was comfortable and safe. When she hugged me I felt like nobody could harm me and I couldn't do wrong. I just wish she was here right now so she could give me a big warm hug and tell me its go be all right.

-GF B2

From The Beat: We're sorry that you lost your loving grandma, GF, but we're happy that you had that kind of love in your life. You will never forget the comfort she gave you, and thinking of her hugs can still bring you comfort. What did she want most for you? Can you give her what she wanted by changing directions?

Go Home, Beat

Personally, I think The Beat Within is a bunch of bs. You guys come here every Tuesday with a new issue, like you're doing something. You come here with an annoying "I care" attitude with a fake smile, but really, you don't give a damn about none of us. All you care about is getting paid to do what you do.

You say this is voluntary? I find that very hard to believe. What the hell is the point of you guys coming here every week with a new topic to write about, cutting into our rec time? Stop coming! Your magazine is weak! Why would you want to hear our opinion about something? It's not doing anything for either of us. All it does is gives you guys something to do, to keep yourselves busy, because obviously you have nothing better to do. It's not helping us get out of here, all its doing is putting us in The Beat letting other people read what we feel. Is that supposed to make us feel special?

I been here for a while and I came to the first couple Beat Withins, but I felt it was bs because I felt a fake vibe from you guys. I stopped coming for a while, but I got tired of staying in my room so I just came out to show you how I feel. This is how I feel. Peace, Beat Within

-Grown-Ass-Man SF B4

From The Beat: So, what's a big "Grown-Ass-Man" like you doing in a little baby jail like this? If you think we're fake, stop coming to the workshops. It's that simple. (It's kind of silly to think we might go away; we've been coming to YGC for even more years than you have!) Of course, we disagree with your assessment that we don't care about any of you, but to be honest, it's not very important. What is important is whether you care about yourself or not, and being in here tells us that you don't care enough... [By the way, we DO get paid for the work we do, so you're right about that; but most of us could be making [and have made] much more money doing other things but choose to do this for a variety of reasons that you won't appreciate.] Some people love chocolate ice cream; some people hate it. Whatever floats your boat.

When I Can't Sleep

What keeps me up at night is me thinking about what would I be doing if I was out. Would I be spending time with my family or would I be out smoking trees on the block with my thugs? Or, would I be trying to do good and get a job and do right? Or I can do all of that if I was out? But I'm not. I'm in this hellhole of a place. That's what I think of when I can't sleep.

-White Boy B2

From The Beat: We can't answer what you choose to do when you walk out of here. Only you can answer those questions (and time will tell). But there is one question which we can answer. You asked: "Or can I do all of that if I was out," and the answer is a resounding, "No." You can't keep one foot in one world and one foot in another and expect anything more than to be ripped up the middle. As Abraham Lincoln said before the Civil War: "A house divided against itself cannot stand." Think about that when you're trying to find sleep.

What Keeps You Up At Night

The cold air is keeping me up

The uncomfortable mattress

The worry of what is going on outside

And with my family and friends

I worry about what the judge is going to say in court.

I wonder, can I really go crazy

If I stay here longer?

-G-Thang B2

From The Beat: Are you thinking about your own comfortable bed and your own loving family? Those are the thoughts that can bring us warmth and comfort or make us feel lonely and hurt. We don't know what the judge is going to say, but whatever he (or she) says, we hope you do it because this is no place to be!

What Keeps Ya Boy Up

What keeps me up at night is thinking about my life, you feel me? I be thinking about what I'ma do when I get out, 'cause I do thangs and get around, yadadi. Sometimes I think about my beezee and what we gone do. I be thinking about my ninjas and if they holding it down. But most of all I think about grapes 'cause I love to smoke. I be thinking about my momma 'cause I know she miss me.

-Lando Boy B2

From The Beat: So, when you think about your freedom, you think about your girlfriend and smoking weed? How is that going to keep you free in the future? Are you thinking about anything that might help you stay out of here — like going back to school, not doing the things that lead to lock-up, a long life?

Thank You Lord

I thank you Lord for my birth and everything that followed.
I thank you Lord and will pray for tomorrow.
I thank you Lord for your guidance, 'cause that's all that counts.
And Lord, I thank you for a dream that came true.

-Fat Rat B2

From The Beat: It's very nice to see you acknowledge your gratitude for the good things that have come to you in life. Of course, that last line leaves us with an obvious question: what was your dream that came true?

Good-Bye To My Homies

I hope my loved ones rest in peace. They meant a lot to me, they showed me things that other people wouldn't, and they taught me things. They died in such a bad way and I pray for their families. These were all my homies. Even thou they were all older I grew up with them. The most tragic one was Lil' Chino because he just had a kid and he was walking with his baby momma and was shot three times and died in her arms.

-Jokes B4

From The Beat: When you think of losing four close friends to the violence of the streets, does it affect your thinking in a way that makes you want to change anything in your life? Does it make you want to avoid their fates, or does it make you want to get even? We see no end to this death for death for death cycle of violence unless you — and all the "yous" — decide that God's gift of life is more important to you than some color or turf or flag or street. (Even though you wrote about four people, you really only told us about one of them, so that's the name we left in.)

Sometimes I Wonder

Sometimes I wonder why the hell I do the shhh I do 'cause all it do is keep bring me back to a place like this, away from my wife and loved ones. This shhh is dumb. A ninja try to do something new with my life an' I still came back to this place. I wonder when the hell they gone stay away from us for we can do us an' stay far away from them. All I want to do is be happy with my baby.

-J-Stubba B4

From The Beat: But like we said before, even though you say all you want to do is be happy with your baby, that's not really all you want to do. You also want to be happy with your "boys" (you want to "do you" and for "them" to stay away from you), and that's why you're here. You haven't yet made that important decision you will need to make if you want to avoid this as a consequence. It is simply not enough to want to be happy with your "wife" if you are also doing dirt on the side...

Thinking Of The Outs

I'll be up at night thinking about what's going on outside these walls, like what are my friends doing, will I still have a home when I get out, or is my aunt tired of all this stupid shhh.

Since I been in here, two people I know were shot — one killed, another shot in the stomach with an AK. I don't know how he made it and also managed to drive hisself to General. I am glad he survived. He is real close with the family.

-Steven B4

From The Beat: It is very hard to be in here and lose all control over what is going on out there. But when we read about what is going on (two friends shot), we wonder if being in here might not be a lot safer for you than being on the outs. It's a terrible thing to consider that in our cities, some young people are safer as slaves (locked up) than as free young men and women! Do you lose any sleep thinking about what you're going to do to keep yourself out of here in the future, and to keep yourself as safe out there as possible? What are your thoughts? What do you plan to change?

RIP Nail & OG

Man, I really miss my homies, 'cause it seems like every time I turn around I have to go see one of my homies in a casket. That shhh really be getting to me, like when my uncle Nail Boom died. That shhh really hit me hard. That really hurt me 'cause I really loved him.

On the real tho', I am sick of this shhh going to look over somebody. But love you Nail Boom for life.

One more of my loved ones, OG, I was just with him. And I left for one minute and I heard one shot. Ran down the block and see the homie laying there on the ground. Man, I was going crazy that night. So this one is to OG and Nail, man. Love y'all forever. One love. RIP

-D-Boom B2

From The Beat: Tragedies piled on top of tragedies! Do the deaths of these loved ones make you see your own life any differently? Are you doing anything to stay alive and stay free, things that you didn't used to do (or things that you used to do that you've stopped doing)?

Flashback

Ey, hear this. When I think about my life and what I'ma do when I get out, you know what happens? I have flashes of me on the block or in the 'jects doing what I do, makin' money, havin' fun. And then out of that block, the same black car on dubs speeding up and down the street with the lights off.

And then the next minute I hear gunshots and see my big homie fall on the ground, and me just over him cryin'. So I get scared and just close my eyes. I guess you can just call it love from one lil' brah to just a big one.

So wit' all this said RIP Wax. I love you brah. Smile now cry later.

-Macky-O B4

From The Beat: This is a terrible memory to have to carry around with you, and we're sorry. What does it mean to "smile now and cry later"? It seems to us that what is needed is a lot more crying now! What could Wax have done to stay alive? What are you doing to stay alive? Is the cause he died for worth it? Does the memory of his violent death make you think about things you can change in your own life? How much pain, imprisonment and death do you need to experience before you make those changes?

Back To The Future

What keep me up at night is thinking I might go CVA I have court tomorrow and I'm nervous 'cause my future in on the line. It's funny how I don't appreciate my family when I'm out there, and when I'm locked up I miss them so much. I wish I could just jump in a time machine and just go back in time to change everything I did wrong. I'm going to keep praying and hope The Beat would pray for me too.

-Weapon B4

From The Beat: Of course The Beat is praying and pulling for you, Weapon. But since you can't go back and change the past, how is your past going to change your future? Do you think the memory of missing your family will make you respect them more when you get back home? What other changes do you contemplate?

Wondering About My Future

This week I got court. I'm wondering what the judge 'bout to say, wondering if the judge going to let me go home or send me to another dumb-ass grouper. I'm just hoping that she let me go home because I haven't been home for a long time.

They still want me to do time. That's bs, you feel me, but just keeping my head up and chilling like a villain, keep it trucha fo' these suckas out here. This is Enano, and I'm out.

-Enano B4

From The Beat: By now you know the outcome of court, and we hope it's what you wanted. But if not, we also hope you approach your program (group home?) with an open mind, not planning to run, but planning to see what you can get out of it that will help you. Why is it "bs" that they want you to do time? What do you think the appropriate response is to whatever it is you did? How do you plan to avoid coming back here in the future?

RIP Big Bird

Damn, I can't believe you're gone
The way you got took away was wrong
Got shot point blank over some bs
Didn't get to know you as well as I should've
Nobody could believe that you passed like this
Over some nonsense

Is it wrong for us to move on
I hope 'cause I still can't forget
But I'll leave it at that, so rest in peace!
RIP to all the others that have passed for the same cause

-Yung Bird B4

From The Beat: In Iraq, 3,000 Americans are dead (and more than 100,000 Iraqis) for a "cause" that some old men who call themselves leaders invented and sent them to die for. On our streets, how many young men and women have died for that "cause" that they had nothing to do with creating? Like those other soldiers, you have been sold a fake cause to die for. We wish, instead of following someone else's ideas, you would lead yourself into a cause of your own design — like the cause of getting an education and moving forward in freedom!

I'm nervous 'cause my future in on the line

What Keeps Me Up At Night

What keeps me up is when something bad has happened to my family. I can never sleep when I know that someone in my family isn't safe. I care deeply for my family, as should anyone reading this should, too. When my grandfather passed away, I couldn't sleep for days. The pain hurt so bad that when I laid in bed, all I could do is stay up, looking at the ceiling. RIP, Grandpa.

-Chi Frank LCRS

From The Beat: We're so sorry about your grandfather, Chi Frank. Did the counselors let you go to his funeral? We hope so. How is your family managing without you for so long, while you're at the Ranch? Do they rely on you when you're on the outs? How do you help keep them safe, when you're home? You must supply them with a lot of strength when you can, so that's all good.

Up All Night

Things that keep me up at night are thinking about freedom. I hate being closed up in one area. I want to be able to go to my refrigerator at any time I want during the night. I miss havin' my metro talkin' to my chicks. This shhh is torture. I be hella hungry. They need to feed us more.

-Up Top B2

From The Beat: Well, nobody your age (or any age) should have to go to bed hungry, and that's on them. But losing your freedom, that's on you! If this place is torture, then it's torture that you put yourself into! You want to sleep in your own bed? You want to eat your own food out of your own refrigerator? You want to have girls around? Simple... stay out of here!

Missing Loved Ones Keeps Me Up At Night

Things that keeps me up is that I cannot see my mom and all of my friends. That the things that keeps me up at night because I miss my mom. I cannot see my mom because I am in the hall and all of my friends because they are like my brothers. I will like to get the hell out the hall. I miss my mom because I am in the hall for days and days and cannot see my family and all of my friends.

-Lil' One B2

From The Beat: Yes, it hurts to be taken away from those we love. But when you did whatever it was that brought you here, were you thinking about your family? If not, then now you understand the consequences. If you've been here before, then we have to believe that something is more important to you than your family and friends since you are so willing to risk losing them... But if this is your first time, then we expect you to learn this important lesson and never come back!

Remembering The Outs Keeps Me Up

What keeps me up at night is thinking about the outs. I think about all the good times I spent with friends, family. I think about my life and what direction I'm heading. I think about my future. I am thinking about what I'm gone do to change in life. It stresses me out for real. One love Beat.

-Lgb B2

From The Beat: If the stress you're feeling by being locked up is forcing you to think about the changes you need to make in your life, then maybe it is doing some good. In other words, if you come up with a plan (school, a job, treating yourself and others with respect) that sets your feet on a different path, then the stress you're feeling now will fade away to nothing more than a bad memory. If there's anything we can do to help, please tell us.

What Keeps Me Up At Night

Man, what keeps me up at night is shhh that be goin' through my mind. Stuff I done that I know I should've never did. This charges that they tryin' to put on me. I been in here for one month. And I been in here about six times. But I be missin' the girls, the parties, and everything. I been thinkin' about my family and hella shhh. But that's about it though. That's what keeps me up at night.

-D-Boom B2

From The Beat: You say you miss the girls, the parties, your family... but that you've been here six times! When you keep repeating the same behavior even after you know what the consequences are, it tells us that you weren't thinking of the girls or the parties or your family at those times. So maybe the time to do that kind of thinking isn't after you've handed your freedom over to the system but before...

Nights Up

What keeps me up at night is my family. All the time I spend in YGC just pass right before my eyes. Not knowing how my family's doing and where there at. Are they safe? Are they happy, sad, mad? Thoughts in my head about my family makes me go crazy sometimes, 'cause I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for my actions. I wouldn't be staying up late at night if I would've just went home. I stay mad at myself for staying up late at night because my mind is restless thinking about my family. Hate when I get that phone call and hear problems on the phone. That gets me mad. Nights up thinking about my family.

-Baby Uce B2

From The Beat: We can understand the stress about missing your family, or hearing things that are going on and having no power to control or change any of it. That's one of the worst features about being locked up. But since you know it's your own actions that brought you here, then you also know what actions you have to stop doing to stay out of here. Consider that the place to begin to build a different foundation, and move forward.

I Want To Wake Up

What keep me up at night is the fear of not awakin'

I try to close my eyes, but my hand keep shakin'

The crime I did an' how I could've dodged the fed

Now the people I love I really do miss

I wish, I wish I get out this place

I wanna sleep out, not rest in peace

-Famoso B4

From The Beat: As long as you're thinking about how you could've dodged the cops — and not how you could've avoided doing whatever it was that caused you to have to try to run — you'll always be facing consequences like this, or worse. We can understand why you wish to get out of this place... who wouldn't? But believe us when we say that's the very, very easy part. While you're in here, you should be thinking of what you have to change. You need to sacrifice something about how you're living if you want to stop putting your life into the hands of strangers. If not, you'll be writing other poems in the future crying to get out.

Can't Remember

When I'm in YGC I feel that I miss my family and that I can't believe what I did. The thing that's messed up is that I came only by myself. My other homie did the same thing I did. He probably snitched on me, but that's not the point.

What I did I was not supposed to do it anyways. I feel desperate when I'm in here. I know I'm going to be here for some time for what I did. But the thing is I don't remember what I did. I know that my friend was in it, but you know the sad thing is that your own gramma can't see you, only your mother and father could see you. I can't even see my sister and brother. But you know, I still pray for God to help me and give me another chance for I could see my family. I hope I get out tomorrow, I pray to God.

-Skinny B2

From The Beat: You say you can't believe what you did, but that you can't remember what you did... How is that possible? Were you so drunk (or stoned) that you can't remember? If the answer is yes, then we think that's the biggest problem you have to work on. That's the real danger with alcohol. You can put yourself into a state of mind that lets you do things you wouldn't do otherwise, and then forget you did them! What do you think God has in store for you? Did He create you for a purpose? Are you living up to His purpose?

What Keeps Me Up At Night

What keeps me up? The outside world keeps me up. Reason why? 'Cause I know I have a little brother out banging the block hard. The only time he comes out is at night. At that time, that when the shhh goes down. It's just a matter of time when he kills someone or someone kills him

-Fashion T B5

From The Beat: Do you feel some responsibility (and some guilt) for the path your brother is taking? Is this a case where you told him one thing (like "Don't bang"), but he saw you doing something else? We're sorry you're stressing, but you have to remember that the young ones in a family always look up to the older ones and follow their lead. So, if you were out there with him, how would you show (not tell) what he should be doing?

My Ninja Was Cool

Rally Reub was the type of ninja that was cool, but if you pushed him, he will go bad, but he was cool. He died a couple months ago on the block. Everybody loved him and still miss him. RIP, Rally Reub. Rally Reub died because of beef and because of a set that he claimed, but we miss you, big bra, Rally Reub. We all we got.

-Lil' Kata B1

From The Beat: It hurts our heart to read of these senseless deaths because of "beef" that means so much more when you're just a teenager than when you get a little maturity under your belt. Wasn't there some way to resolve the beef without anybody getting hurt or dying? Do you think that whatever the beef or set, his death was worth it? What are you doing to avoid the kind of beef that ends so tragically — and so permanently?

What Keeps Me Up At Night?

Man, what keeps me up at night? Man, I be thinking about when the hell I'm gone get out of here. When my grandma come visit every day it be hitting me hard when I go in my room, and sometimes I cry.

What else keeps me up is when I think about my nieces because I don't want them to follow my footsteps. I want them to be safe. And last but not least I be thinking like do God be answering my prayers.

-M Lene GU

From The Beat: You will walk out of here, so stressing about "when" seems pointless. More important, do you also think about what you're going to do (differently) when you get out so that you don't have to come back? If you need some help making the right decisions, just think of your little nieces. They will most certainly look to you as a model, and it won't matter what words you tell them. It's your actions they will be following.

What Will It Be Like?

What keeps me up at night is the time. When I sit there in my room and wonder what will it be like when I get out. What movies will be out? What songs will be hits? Who will be hot, and who will be nothing? What changes will happen over time?

-Guy B5

From The Beat: You know, Guy, the things you wonder about are basically what the future will look like. We wonder about the same things (who will be hot next year, what movies will be coming out, etc.). Do you ever think about what you will be like when you get out?

Think Before You Do

Have I ever lost my mind? Not really, but sometimes I feel like losing my mind. But I don't let people get to me and bring me down. Some people let little things get to dem, but sometimes you just have to think before you do.

Sometimes people just do what they do, then think about it. That's not good. That's why people end up in jail. So think before you do, and keep that in mind.

-Man Man B4

From The Beat: This is good advice, Man Man. Are you here because you didn't follow this advice? What kind of things set you off? What do you do to keep yourself from going off?

Sometimes I Wonder...

What's up Beat? This yo' boy DeAries aka D-Small. Sometimes I wonder why I'm still here in the halls writing to The Beat Within when I can be at the hut posted like a light pole smokin' purple back to back. But that ain't gone happen for dummy long. Well that's life. It happens to the best of us.

-DeAries B5

From The Beat: As long as your thoughts go to posting on the block and smoking trees with your boys, then you don't have to wonder why you're still here writing to us... Yes, lock-up happens to "the best of you" as long as "the best of you" keep doing the worst...

What Keeps Me Up At Night

"What keeps me up night" is a good topic because I could relate to this. The things that keep me up at night are a whole lot of things. The things that keep me up are things like me stressing about being in here. The things are like having someone wake you up to get up and brush my teeth, to shut up, to line up, and not to speak even when you use the bathroom.

That's not what keeps me up mostly, it is missing my family. I space off by looking at the light at the door, day dreaming, thinking what would I be doing if I was home. I say to myself I would be sleeping in my warm room on a comfortable bed and a warm blanket. Then I thought to myself what I would do when I woke up and what would I be doing in my free time. All I could think was chilling outside with my boys, doing something bad and wasting my time.

I mostly think about how I got in here, a stupid reason to be here. If I would've listen to my sister and my mom, I would be at home.

-Freddy B2

From The Beat: Is this the first time you've been locked up? If it is, then we can understand why you miss your family so much, and we can hope that this experience will make you understand why you should listen to your mother (who has lived a lot longer than you). But if this isn't your first time here, then it seems like you love some things ("chilling outside with your boys and doing something bad...") more than you love being at home with your mom. If you don't agree, tell us why you gave the system the power it now has to take you from your home and lock you up?

I Look At Life As A War Zone

Big bra, Killa Monte and Tizzle Ant. Man, I lost my big homies in a shooting which changed my life, because now I look at life as a war zone. Them was the closest ninjas I had that would ride with whatever.

But the day my ninjas was shot, they told me to get off the block, an' soon as I got on, my ninjas got they brains split. Man, an' ever since then I took life in another way. RIP Killa Monte and Thizzle Ant. You will be missed. See you when I get there.

-Lil' Junk B1

From The Beat: Lil' Junk, your homies were warning you to get off the block because they knew the possible consequences. It's tragic that they were not able to follow their own excellent advice. Now that these tragic killings have occurred, how have you taken your life another way? What did you used to do that you won't be doing any more in order that you can live a long life?

What Keeps You Up At Night

I'm thinking 'bout Nemo late at night
Holding my pillow
Lookin' at my prom picture we looked right
Economy and poverty ain't gettin' right
Hop bring me KFC everybody wanted a bite
I'm in jail holdin' it down keepin' it tight
Can't wait to be home 360 nights from tonight

-Cash Money GU

From The Beat: Like the movie asks, "Where's Nemo?" What else keeps you up at night? Any particular thoughts running through your head that's preventing you from sleep? When you do get home next year, do you picture yourself doing things differently? How?

Thought It Was Love

You told me lies, I thought they were true!
You said to give myself to you,
And believe in you,

I took you for granted, now I am lost, and you found,
So you put me down, but yet still had me feeling high
I thought it was love but now I am found,

You told me, but it's okay 'cause I am gonna stand strong and put defeat all around me.

Now I am strong and bigger than you think.

-Rosie GU

From The Beat: We all learn and grow from pain — and we've all experienced the pain of love that melts away to nothing. Sometimes, we are the cause of our own pain!

Rest In Peace

RIP to my homie OG because he was like a big brother to me. He looked out for me when I didn't have anything. I really respected him to the fullest. Always remember, never forgotten. It's so many homies I could write about but it hurts to even think about it.

-Lloyd B2

From The Beat: We can only imagine how much pain you — all of you — carry around on the daily with all that you have experienced. We will add OG to our list of tragic and premature deaths, and remind you that you can only keep his memory alive as long as you keep yourself alive!

Why Do Black People Kill Black People?

Sometimes I wonder why black people kill black people. I don't know. But why kill my big homie? He died four or five years ago. He was twenty-six. He was in the projects. They had his girlfriend. They knocked on his door. When he answered the door, he saw her and got shot in the head.

I'm always with you in life or death. I love you, my ninja. RIP, Wax.

-Lil' D B1

From The Beat: That's so terrible, Lil' D. If a young black homie asked you the question you're asking — why do black people kill each other? — how would you answer him? How do you answer yourself? Why did this have to happen to Wax? Was he doing the things that you might predict would end this way? Are you? What do you think white people at the top of the food chain think about Blacks killing Blacks? Do you have any solutions to suggest to stop the war of black people against black people, or the killing among any races?

No Respect

A few years ago, my homie was walking with his two sons who was seven years old and two years old, and somebody came from behind and then they was tryin' to fight 'em. And then my homie thought they were gonna fight, so he told his older son to take the baby to the house, because my homie lives on the enemy's territory. My homie was ready to fight, but somebody came from behind and put a gun to his face and then shot him several times. They kill him. After that, everybody in the 'hood was mad, because he was a big homie in the 'hood who got a lot of respect.

After that, my homies went to the 'block and took some of they homies and they was doin' bad things to all the enemies every time they were seen wearin' the wrong color. They was takin' them down. This happened awhile back, and we still remember it. Homies be taggin' his name everywhere in the 'hood, 'cause he was with his babies, 'cause that's why there's no respect now. Now we think differently. We see the enemy with the family, 'cause they had no respect for our homie's family, so why should we have respect for they family?

Right now it's peace, 'cause that happened a while ago. Today, I remember you, homie. All the homies miss you, vato. You always have been for the block and your little homies.

When I think of you, I feel like I want to go off. You know your little homie, Sp, will always remember you, because you taught me how to be a real vato. You get all that respect I have now, and gracias, vato. I will write yo' name big someday. Rest in peace, Memo.

-Sp LCRS

From The Beat: We appreciate your attempt to writing this tribute to your homie loss to the gang wars. Yet, we don't get any hint that you want a better safer community. You say in so many words, that you still want to take off on those who killed your homie. You still make a point to identify your hood, your color, your gang. FYI, gangs have no respect for others. This goes back to the Wild West, the Roaring twenties through today and all that Scarface/Soprano/mafia shhh. It's a pity how many people have given up their life to this world. We know plenty of gang members who are attempting or have moved on from the gang life, and of course tragically we know many RIP or housed for life in prison. We're so glad that there's peace in the hood. How long will it last? How committed are you to peace? What's your plan to staying alive/free so your family and your future children can really get to know their son/dad as a young man making a difference in the hood. Rid yourself of the slow pain!

'Bout To Be A Dad

W'as up, Beat? I just came back. Remember I was in Hillcrest? Well, I got released and got sent home. I was at home for five days. On the Friday dat I got released, I found out that my girl was pregnant wit' ma baby.

Well, I just got played, 'cause they told me I was home on probation, and this morning ma PO called me and said dat he was going to put me on custody. Well, I hope I get out tomorrow, 'cause I got court an' I want to see ma baby mama.

-Smiley B1

From The Beat: It's sadly ironic, Smiley, but by making your girlfriend pregnant and then getting locked up, you're showing that you are not ready to be a father! It is irresponsible to bring children into this world when you are in no position to provide for their needs. And the most important of these needs is your presence in their lives! We wish more young people would take precautions against pregnancy (and, by the way, against STDs like AIDS) because the pattern of children having children only makes their problems harder to deal with. Even in this piece, you blame your PO (rather than yourself) for your situation, another sign that you haven't yet accepted responsibility for your actions. All that means you need to do some growing up in preparation for being the father your child will need. Wanting to see your baby's mama and wanting a baby is not enough, not nearly enough. You have to come up with a plan that means you can remain in their lives when you walk out of here. You have a little time. Use it to think about a future that now includes another new life. Don't waste this chance to prepare yourself to be a real father, and not just a sperm donor.

Can't Forget The Homies

Rest in peace to all the dead homies. OG was my big bra. We grew up together. I miss my dead homie Spank Money because he was a real big homie to me. He told me to go to school when I was cuttin'. My big cousin' Bay told me to stay out of trouble every time he see me. RIP, I can't forget about my big homie OG Bob. I love all. Big bra love Fat thug always.

-Fat T B5

From The Beat: Do you want to live a long life, Fat Thug? If so, what are you doing to make that happen?

Posted On The Block

(An Interview With Anthony)

TBW: Hi, Anthony. You've never come to our Beat workshop before. We'll interview you pretty much about anything you want. You get to choose the topic for you to talk about.

A: I want to call this "Posted On The Block."

TBW: Okay, "Posted On The Block." What do you want to say about being posted on the block? What goes down for you when you're posted?

A: Well, last time I was posted, I got busted for carrying a gun. I'm here for possession of a firearm.

TBW: Well, you're really not supposed to talk about your case, but since you've already been to court, maybe it's okay. Let's see what happens. You had a gun with you?

A: Yes.

TBW: Why?

A: Because I was chillen with the homies. We had a phone call. I grabbed it and we hit the block. Then we went to Mission, had a fight with some people from the other side. Then one of the people from the other side ran to the police and me and the homies ended up gettin' chased. We made it a few blocks down and we got ambushed by the police at gunpoint. I had a gun in my backpack and I threw it under a car and this man seen me throw the backpack under the car, so he told the police where I threw it at, so the officer grabbed the backpack. My ID was inside, and the police asked who was Anthony....., but I gave him a fake name, so he told us, one of us had to be that person. So the man who seen me throw it came over and pointed me out. That's how I got greased.

TBW: What did you learn from all this?

A: One thing—think before I act, because if I had thought about it for a minute, I wouldn't be in this predicament I'm in now.

TBW: What would you have done differently?

A: I'm glad I didn't fire a gun, because it would have been worse for me than it is now.

TBW: What if you had shot someone?

A: If I had shot someone, I probably wouldn't even be here, I'd be in YA for murder or attempted murder.

TBW: How would you feel if you'd shot somebody?

A: It's not like I'd feel sorry for him, because it's beef in the streets and people shoot at me every day.

TBW: So you wouldn't care if you killed someone?

A: I wouldn't shoot no innocent person, but people from the other side, I wouldn't feel sorry for them, because they wouldn't feel sorry for shootin' me.

TBW: How does how you think they'd feel if you died, which, you guess, is that they wouldn't care, affect how you'd feel if you killed one of them?

A: If it ain't one of the homies, then I don't care if they get hit.

TBW: Why not? They're still young men, like you are. Why should any of you die?

A: Because it's been goin' on for years, this turf stuff, and I've lost a lot of homies to it, so why stop now?

TBW: Why not? Why do you personally have to jump into this, no matter how long it's been going on?

A: It's not like I jumped in it, I was born in it, and ever since I was younger, I've been runnin' around the 'hood, hearin' gunshots and seein' people get shot, so it's like, it will never stop.

TBW: What are you going to do to make it stop, at least for you? Why can't you walk away?

A: I've been shot at multiple times.

TBW: How many times?

A: I don't have a number.

TBW: Can you guess?

A: I don't have a number.

TBW: More than ten times?

A: Yes.

TBW: More than twenty?

A: No.

TBW: Even if you have been shot at a lot of times, you're still alive. Not everybody who's been shot at is still alive. Even if you think it's normal to live in an area where everybody gets shot at, why can't you stop getting into any mess? You're so young? Why should you have to die? Why don't you do whatever you have to, to keep your precious life?

A: Because even if I stop, the enemies aren't going to stop. They'll still come at me if they see me. Sometimes I'm outside and someone drives by. They don't shoot at just one person, they shoot at everybody. They don't care who they hit. They just try to hit anyone. Police don't solve no murders. They don't care if we die. They even told us, they don't care if we die. They just leave it to us to solve it (any shooting) ourselves.

TBW: So you think the police don't care if you're murdered?

A: In documentaries like "Straight Outta Hunter's Point," they show a police who say they give us guns and dope and let us kill ourselves. They say that to us when they come through the projects, they say the same thing.

TBW: Do you believe them when they say they don't care if you die?

A: Yeah, I believe them.

TBW: Why do you think they feel that way?

A: Because we mess up their communities.

TBW: You should die because you mess up their communities? Even though the police may be cold and don't care if you all die, why don't you care about your precious life and about killing other people?

A: It's not that I don't care about my life, I do, but it's just the way we live.

TBW: Do you know how many people in this room (the cafeteria down at Log Cabin Ranch) we've heard say practically that same exact thing? That they're resigned to living this life on the block, risking their lives every day for the block, carrying guns, ready to die or kill for the block? It's tragic. It's insane that any of you should have to die, that so few of you are willing to walk away.

A: Even if I walked away, if I went to the Century Theater in Daly City with the homies, and we see some of our enemies down there...if anybody's got guns, it's on.

TBW: So it's never going to stop? Nothing in the rest of the world means enough to you to try to build a life around it?

A: There's a lot of times I've felt like walking away, chillen, layin' low, but I always end up on the block.

-Ant LCERS

From The Beat: You sound so resigned to your life on the block. It's heartbreaking to hear and read what you say. Even if your life of perpetual danger seems normal to you, because so many people in your neighborhood live that way, why don't you take the initiative and get out of that life? Walk away! If you don't, don't you think it's just a matter of time before you get killed or you kill someone else? Why, now that you have a chance to stop the mess, at least for yourself, don't you come up with some other, better, wholesome, life-affirming plan and do it? If you need help getting out of your neighborhood, gang, whatever, get it now! Ask!

There's a lot of times I've felt like walking away, chillen, layin' low, but I always end up on the block

From Me To Nemo

I lay in the dark with him by my side
The first time here I remember I cried
I learned at school while he learned in the streets
This man I love so strong and so sweet
Got scars on his chin, scratch marks on his back
I love this street ninja though I'm college bound
I know why he shoots I know why he kills —
the hype is not true, he got mad skills
His passion is strong when he makes love to me
I love my man, they think he's not right for me
They intimidate, they try to degrade
They don't understand, they just don't see how we mate
The love for my man continues to grow
Some nights it's easy, some night I just don't know
The danger that makes up this love is true
I can walk away now but why try and enter the dark without my boo?

-Cash Money GU

From The Beat: If this man you love so much shoots and kills, he's not only not right for you, he's not right for himself. What do "mad skills" count for if he's going to give his life up to this system — and if he's doing what you describe, there's no doubt where he's headed. Love is blind, so we don't expect you to stop loving him because of these words. But we do hope that that love — yours for him and his for you — will lead him to a new understanding of his purpose in life, and what he owes those who love him, including you. If he is committed to the lifestyle of guns and 'hoods and cops, then — whether you like it or not — you will be "entering the dark without (your) boo."

Rest In Peace

I just want to say Rest in Peace to all
ma real ninjas that's six feet under.
Rest in Peace. I just want to say I love
y'all. I gone keep it lit. Save me a place
in heaven. Thug in peace.

-Lil' Purp B1

From The Beat: There's no such thing as thugging in peace, Lil' Purp, and the long list of dead homies you supplied should prove that to you! (We took out the list of names because it doesn't satisfy our requirement that if you're going to write an RIP, you give us a piece about the person you're paying tribute to. Just a line about each is not enough.) How many of these boys, now gone from the earth, would be telling you, "Value your place on earth" if they could come back to advise you?

Why?

Why we had to come to jail?
Why do people burn in hell?
Why ma ninjas had to die?
Why he had to take that ride?
Why, when the police came
I couldn't just run and hide?
Why he had to be on tha block?
Why? Why? Why?

I love y'all
Holla at ya boy, Lil' Purp

-Lil' Purp B1

From The Beat: Of all these questions, Lil' Purp, we can only answer the first: You didn't have to come to jail... you came to jail as the direct consequence of your actions. So, a better question would be: Why did I have to do what I did that led me here? We have written many times that your determination to go back to the block would only lead you right back here — and here you are! So, when you're free again, are you just going to repeat the past (and therefore bring about the same future), or do you plan to do some things differently? Like what?

This One Is For My Boo

What's up boo?
Guess what? I'm really missin' you!
Man, now I seen what you been through!
Man, if I only knew!
I wouldn't have done what I did —
Shot, running around, actin' like a out-of-control kid!
But anyways, let me go! See you when I get home!

-Lil' Tiff GU

From The Beat: Why would knowing what he went through have kept you from acting like an "out-of-control kid"? And now that you do know, how will your life be different when you walk out of here?

The Beat Within Interviews Another Anonymous

TBW: Hello, AA. What would you like to be interviewed about today?
 AA: What about what it's like to be shot?
 TBW: Whoa! Okay, we can do that. Fine, if that's what you feel like talking about. I guess you've been shot, right?
 AA: Right.
 TBW: How long ago did it happen?
 AA: A few years ago.
 TBW: Where were you shot?
 AA: In my hip.
 TBW: What's it like to be shot?
 AA: Now it feels like it never happened.
 TBW: Did it hurt at first?
 AA: Yes.
 TBW: But it doesn't anymore?
 AA: No.
 TBW: Did you go to San Francisco General Hospital?
 AA: Yes.
 TBW: When you went to the hospital, what happened?
 AA: They let me sit in the waiting room for hours, then they flushed it (the wound) out, then they put me through a CAT-scan, like an X-ray, to see where it went, 'cause there was no exit wound.
 TBW: Did they find the bullet?
 AA: Yes.
 TBW: But they didn't take it out?
 AA: No.
 TBW: Why not?
 AA: They said it would cause problems, that it would be safer not to.
 TBW: Did you believe them, the surgeons?
 AA: Yeah, I did.
 TBW: But if the bullet was in your hip, why was it dangerous to remove it?
 AA: I don't know. They (the doctors) said if they go in, they might hit something else, so I agreed.
 TBW: How do you feel about it now?
 AA: It's cool. It don't give me no problems. I hope it don't give me no problems in the future.
 TBW: Did you have medical insurance when you went to General?
 AA: No.
 TBW: Do you think that's it's because you had no medical insurance, that that's the reason they didn't take the bullet out of you?
 AA: I don't know.
 TBW: Do you wish now that they'd taken it out?
 AA: I'm glad. It's fine. Anyway, that's the way it is.
 TBW: Is it better that we don't talk about who shot you?
 AA: Yes.
 TBW: Okay, we'll leave that alone.
 AA: Good.
 TBW: Thanks so much for confiding in The Beat readership. It must have been terrible for you to get shot—scary and painful.
 AA: Yeah, it really was.
 TBW: We're just happy for you that you're all right now.
 AA: Yeah. Thanks.

-Aa LCRS

From The Beat: It still must be really scary to have your life threatened by someone, even if you survived with only a shot to the hip, AA. Your hip's not that far from your heart. Did getting shot slow you down, influence you into being the quiet, observant person you've become down at the Ranch? Now that you're free and home again, we hope you keep yourself safe. Best of luck to you on the outs!

Wishing

I live my life as a hot boy wit' dreads,
 Always breaking the law, always busting heads,
 I got a lot of beezies, but I try to keep it on the low,
 But it's kind of hard when everybody in Oakland know,
 I'm always on the run when I see the police,
 Now I'm in the hall wishing I was on the streets.

-Dell B5

From The Beat: This life you love has got you here/Where only boys are all that's near/Running from the cops will end for Dell/if and when they put him in a prison cell/Some sentences last so long in that pen/That Dell may never see a female again!

Thinking About Change

What keeps me up is thinking about the day I get out, and what I'm gonna do about how I'm gonna change my life by not running from any group homes because all it did to me is get back in this place, and that ain't what I want. I want to be free to go home and do what I gotta do on the outs. Another thing that keeps me up is thinking about my parents and what they would want me to do, like stay in school and get good grades and stop breakin' the law.

Well, that's all I gotta say "Beat Within" to those kids that's like me and can't stay in a grouper. Just finish your program and come out a free person. I'm tellin' y'all its not crackin' bein' on the run, always watching out for them "boys." So I'ma holla at y'all next time. Until then, stay smooth and you will see what I'm talking about.

-Young H B4

From The Beat: This is exactly the right way to use your time — thinking about what you have to change to stay out of this place! You've figured something very important out, which is that when you run, you're not just running "from" a placement, you're also running "to" a placement, and that placement is called YGC. So the advice you give is right on the money, and we hope you follow it because there's nothing very smart about handing your freedom over to a system that can't possibly care about you as much as you care about yourself.

Up Nearly All Night

What' keeps me up at night is watching TV or chillin' with my homies, hearin' gunshots and hearin' people doing donuts in their cars. Me talking to people on the phone keeps me up, and me looking at Myspace keeps me up at nighttime.

-Marquis B1

From The Beat: Maybe you're just a night person at heart, Marquis. Do you love the drama, the mystery of the night? Or do the gunshots worry you, keep you too agitated to sleep? Do you go to school during the day? If so, how do you stay awake? If not, don't you think that would make for a better future? Have you ever imagined sleeping away from the city, out in the country where the old "noise" you hear are the roosters crowing at the rising sun? Would you get a good night's sleep there?

VOICES IN SPANISH

Lo Que Quiero

Quisiera tiempo para jugar porque extraño la libertad. Quisiera estar afuera de todo esto. Quiero estudiar, jugar y ser alguien en la vida para ser alguien el día de mañana. Andar en las calles solo aprendemos malas cosas.

From The Beat: Todas estas cosas tú las puedes realizar siempre y cuando te pongas las pilas. Comienza educandote. Una buena educación abre muchas puertas en la vida.

What I Want

I would like time to play because I miss my freedom. I would like to be away from all this. I want to study, play, and be someone in life so I can be someone when tomorrow comes. All we learn from being out on the streets are bad things.

-Melsar B1

From The Beat: You can always realize all these things when you step in here. Start educating yourself. A good education opens many doors in life.

Mis Pensamientos

Si hubiera esa oportunidad me hiría donde mi novia y hacer lo que no puedo hacer aquí. Corriera hasta que no pueda correr más.

Mi lugar favorito es un parque con agua porque es tranquilo con aire puro y sin ruido. También un gym porque ahí conozco a algunas personas.

Lo que más extraño de mi niñez es cuando la familia se reunía para comer, jugar juegos, hablar, y cuando nos íbamos a bañarnos a la playa.

Lo que me gustaría tener otra vez es un carro de juguete que tenía control remoto el cual se me cayó en el agua.

From The Beat: Tienes bonitos lugares donde pasarla bien. No hay ningún lugar mejor que los lugares que traen paz y tranquilidad a nuestras vidas. Ver a la familia reunida es un don que todos desearíamos ver. ¿Sabes porque ahora no puedes disfrutar de esas reuniones?

My Thoughts

If I had this opportunity, I would go to where my girlfriend is and do what I cannot do here. I would run until I couldn't run any more.

My favorite place is a park with water because it is calm with pure air and without noise. Also, a gym because I would know some people there.

What I miss the most from my childhood is when the family would get together to eat, play games, talk, and when we go bathe at the beach.

What I would like to have again is a toy car that had a remote control, which ended up falling in the water.

-Luis B2

From The Beat: You have nice places where you can have a good time. There are no better places than the places that bring peace and tranquility to our lives. Seeing our family reunited is a gift that we all wish we could see. Do you know why you now can't enjoy these reunions?

I'd Go See My Family, My Ninjas, And A Beezy

If I had a chance to have two hours out of jail, I would go see my family. Then I would go to my block, see my ninjas, then I would have an hour left. Then I would go with a beezy for the rest of the hour.

-Pee Wee

From The Beat: What would you do with your family? What if you get caught again in those few minutes when being with your friends? That would be violation of probation? A lot of things can happen in seconds.

I Can't sleep When I'm Worried Or Excited

There are times when I can't sleep at night, because I have a serious problem or issue that is really bothering me. I just can't stop thinking about it. But it's not always like that, there are times when I can't sleep at night because I am anxious about something or excited about something good that I know is going to happen the next day.

-Clara

From The Beat: So what do you do if not sleep? Do you watch TV, listen to the radio, write, exercise, just lie there and look at the walls? Tells us more.

What's My Future Like?

Sometimes I wonder if I'm going to be here to have a kid and see her or him grow up. That really gets to me the most. 'Cause the way I'm living ain't really going (good) for me. I hate to say it but I'm gone be locked up or dead if I don't change my ways. I pray to God every night to help me do right.

My Mom moved to Marin to help me. I was doing me on the block all night and day, and that's getting old to me. I'm almost grown. I got a girl or should I say a wife. I have to do right by her side. 'Cause I can't keep coming back and forth to jail. That's not me.

-Lamont

From The Beat: You can only live one day at a time. That being said, you've got to live one day at a time. How long did it take you to get into the position you're in now? How long have you been messing up? Things may not happen for you over night because that's not the way of the world. It's going to take patience and hard work to do what you have to do. All that skill and hard work it took for you to "do you" all night on the block is what you also have to apply to you doing you the right way. Feel us on that, it's real talk!

I Love Money

I love my scrilla. I love my dough. I love my money. When I work I get something out of it--money. I love my family--my mother, my sister, my brother, my unknown daddy. I love my material things, like jags on dubs.

-Big Bre

From The Beat: You seem to love a lot of "things" but what about that which matters most? Do you love yourself? What about you Big Bre? What about total freedom?

Rest In Peace Loved Ones

This is a dedication to all my loved ones who passed away.

RIP

Dad- I didn't really know him.

Big Rob- Loved to danced.

Big Mike- Loved to fight.

Aunt Joretha- Loved yo Family

Big James- Bled the block of Richmond

Nehemia- Always carried guns

Freddie- A real hitta

Big TJ- Loved music

Lil' Dereck- Hardheaded

Baby Denzel- 9 year old rapper

Grandad- Always watched wrestling

Nanny- Gave me my first whoopin'

Well my list of dedications is done with so until I see them in the long run, one love.

-James

From The Beat: Nice, yet tragic. Keep your head up and handle your business. RIP to your family no longer here, and best to you towards your future.

I Miss My Dragon Remote Control Car

I miss my remote control car. I would press a button and it would bounce on its hydraulics. It has a dragon on it. It had big, shiny wheels. My brother sat on it and it broke open.

-James

From The Beat: That's too bad. It sounds like you had a lot of fun with your car. Is it possible for you to get another one that looks just like the one you had, especially with that dragon on it?

Crazy From Talking To Myself Out Loud

Yes, there have been times when I've lost my mind, especially in here, when I'm lying in my bed, stuck in between these walls. Just thinking and thinking and thinking, until it gets to the point when I hear myself talking to myself out loud, and then I feel like I am going crazy.

-Clara

From The Beat: What you're going to have to do is remember these times as vividly as possible when you get out of there and turn those negative memories in to motivation to stay out of there!

Why Do I Get So Mad?

Sometimes I wonder why I fight. There is no reason why I get so mad. I took anger management when I first got on probation and it worked. Now it don't.

-Big T

From The Beat: What's different now about your anger than before? You are in control of you. Anger management doesn't control your anger... they teach you to be in control of it. You! Think about what's making you angry, who and/or why you are angry at and figure out away to maintain yourself. No one is going to suffer more than you in the long run because of you not being in control of yourself! It's all about you! Practice! Think before you respond/ react!

My Dear Grandmother

One person that is no longer with us is my dear grandmother. She was the sweetest most loving person I've ever known in my whole life! She was my mother's world and now she is gone, gone to a better place, free of pain! She died of cancer and was a very strong woman, mother of ten! RIP Lidia Garay.

-Clara

From The Beat: What a lovely tribute to your grandmother. How is your mother managing without her? How is your mother managing without you and your grandmother?

Rhyme & Reason

Sweet substance keep's me on the big,
can you dig,
eye's open,
wide awake,
so when the boy's come,
time to shake,
some of these fools is all fake,
from 12 to 8 up all night
thinking about what to do,
do you love me baby
I love you to.

-Little O

From The Beat: forward at a fast rate ... you either move forward with it or get left behind! At this rate, you're being left in the dust.

Two Hours Of Freedom

If I had two hours of freedom, I would find some of my friends and go hit up a party for an hour. Then, I would spend my other hour with my boy and we would go run away to somewhere and live together for until I got caught.

-Paige

From The Beat: Really, then what? Let us guess, you get into a worst situation, they bring you back in here, and you'll have to spend more time than what expected. Will this be fun for you in the end?

San Rafael Hill

Every Sunday night I get in my Caprice and drive to the San Rafael hill with a female. On the way there, alarms go off because of the JL Advio W7 knocking in the trunk. When I reach the top of the hill, I got a view of San Rafael and the Richmond Bridge.

Once at the top, I switch the radio station to 94.9 and listen to oldies all night long with a pretty female next to me. I can't go in to details, if you know what I mean. Two hours later, windows still fogged up, so I hit the defrost and head back to the house.

-Cuervo

From The Beat: Sounds good. Sounds like this is your "Inspiration Point!"

What keeps me up at night?

What keeps me up at night are two things. First is what I did to end up at juvenile hall the third time and second is thinking about when I get out and what I'm going to do to get off probation.

-Brandon

From The Beat: Sounds as though your head is where it's supposed to be: on doing better... for you! Don't be afraid or shy to the point where you can't ask for help with getting your life back on track. And never give up on yourself!

I Lost My Mind In My Juvy Room

One time I lost my mind in my room, thinking about my mom, when she always said that gangbanging is bad, when my family had good times, when I had a good time with friends, and when I'm getting out of juvenile hall. And that's all the things I get crazy about.

-Luis

From The Beat: It's really hard when you're locked up to make things better in your real life, isn't it? You can get really good ideas in your room, but your real life is far away. Does your mom visit you? If so, why don't you discuss with her your plans about how you can make your life better when you're free again? Maybe she'll have some good ideas about how to help you.

Two Hours

If I had two hours of freedom, the first thing I will do is go to my mom's house, get dressed and get in the shower, for twenty minutes.

Then I will pop my grill and put all of my rings on, and my chain on, so I can stunt and shine like a star supposed to.

Then I will go to the mall for a minute, for at least 45 minutes.

Then I will have, like fifty-five minutes left. I will go to the town and go visit my sister.

-Lamont

From The Beat: What about paying a visit to your parents or your home? Life is short and if we were you, we would try to enjoy what life has to offer us.

Karma's A Trip

And that ain't no joke 'cause no matter what it is that we do in this world
That is hurtin' somebody, we gonna have to pay
That's why we gotta stop livin' our lives this crazy way
Instead of hurtin' people we should save them
Teach the lil' boys an' girls that are thinking that the street life style is the way to go
That they got so much to look forward to
That they don't need to go through all the stuff we went through
Bein' gang affiliated, getting locked up and end up getting addicted to drugs!
That's all too much
Damn! I gotta do something with my life
And make it worth livin'

-Lil' Skizz

From The Beat: Take it one day at a time, Lil' Skizz. You are dealing with your addictions right now, and that is the place to concentrate your efforts. We think you'll be amazed at how many things fall into place for you once you gain control of your drug use and have time to think things through with a clear mind.

I Do

I do
I love you
I would've married you
I did only need you
And it was my world
I do
I do still want you
But I need to move on
I hate this but I need
I do
I do like you
Even though I love another
I do want you in my life
I do, I do, I do
I do want you, but you hurt me
You know I hurt easy
You are so mean, you took my trust
I tried to have away
That a I do

-Dolores

From The Beat: We're not sure what you're trying to say to this person, but it appears that this is someone you once loved who didn't respect you, and now you want to keep him/her as a friend but not a love. Let us know if you succeed, because these "friendship" relationships can be the hardest of all after a failed love affair.

Sometimes I Wonder...

Yo, I ain't no dumb breezy... I wonder what big stuff go on in life? I wonder what really happened to 2pac? Are there aliens outside of our galaxy? What about the government? 'Sup with dem?

-Maria

From The Beat: No, you are not dumb, but you tend to be a little lazy. As we have said in the past, when you write on all three topics, you are able to get away with one or two sentences about each (or, at the most, four sentences). This doesn't tell us much about any of the topics, so we really want you to stop writing on all three! Choose one topic and give it everything you've got, because these little bitty pieces don't show us much of anything!

I Should've Listened

People always be tellin' me how to live my life
Like they know what's good for me
Like they been in my shoes
But on the real, nobody knows nothin'
Yeah, ok, I might have shared some bits and pieces of my life
But still they have no clue
Everyone keep telling me they here to help me
But are they really?
What about all them times I told them that I need to talk to you
That I need you in my life
Then they turn around and tell me no
All they doin' is makin' me go through more shhh
Man, too many rules up in here and I hate it
I ain't used to this
It's like, "Damn! Why'd I do what I did?"
If I would have just stayed outta trouble
And went to school every day like my nest friend told me to
I wouldn't have got myself caught up in this mess"
Maybe God's makin' me pay the price
'Cause, damn, like ma friend Lil' Zillah say
Man, Karma's a trip!

-Lil' Skizz

From The Beat: It's not just karma, Lil' Skizz. You will always get out of something what you put into it. So, if you put into your recovery as much effort and energy as you put into using drugs, the payoff will be huge for you. You may hate it now, but think about tomorrow and not just this moment. Sometimes it's necessary to do things we hate today so that we can enjoy a better life tomorrow.

Continuing The Struggle

Right, I feel like I am lightweight losing my mind. I'm in a house full of young girl that's tryna hide behind their feelings. Then it bring more drama. But it's good because I will laugh and I will frown, but it's all right because I'm gon' be all right. I been through the struggle and I will continue to fight.

-Jazz'ah Belle

From The Beat: Wherever you go in life, there will always be people around you that create drama and make things difficult. One of the skills we hope you develop at Walden House is to learn to roll with the punches, to put up with different people and their ways, and not to lose your mind over it.

RIP Granny

RIP Granny. My grandmother died and she was the best person of my life. She was the only person that understood me and I wish she did not die. RIP Granny.

-Peaches And Cream

From The Beat: What did your granny understand about you that others do not? When did she pass? What would she say to you today if she could come and sit in your room for a few minutes and talk? What would you say to her? Finally, Kameko, we want to emphasize that by writing one or two sentences about each of these topics, you cheat yourself out of finding your own voice and your own thoughts and putting them down on paper. You have written four separate pieces, but put almost nothing in any one of them. We would much prefer to have one topic with four paragraphs than four

You Keep Me Up At Night

You is on my mind, the one I truly love. Why, I don't know. The feeling how I still want you but I can't. Why you broke my heart? Oh why oh why?

I made you my life. You was my one. But now I have to move on. I wish this not true but it is. Stay up all night thinking what I should do. It's hard to move. I had have other crushes and girls and guys that want to be my true one. I want them to be mine. At the same time I still think you is mine.

It's a need I need. I not over you. I don't think I ever will, but I want someone else, so please let me move on so I can have another true to love me.

-Doloris

From The Beat: If he broke your heart, the only way you'll be able to put it all back together is to move on. This is an experience that most everyone has had at one time or another. It's not up to him or her to "let you" move on, it's up to you. It's like a drug... stop thinking about it and start thinking about other things. You'll find someone new, and when you do you'll be surprised at how quickly the memory of this love fades into the distant past.

What Keeps You Up At Night

Yo, I got a roommate and what keeps me up at night is her snoring... Man, once she hit the sack, it's snore city.

-Maria

From The Beat: You need ear plugs!

Sometimes I Wonder

Sometimes I wonder a lot of different things. I wonder why my dad left me. I wonder why I was raped by my step dad for three years long. I wonder why my mother and I don't get along the way I want us to. I wonder why my grandfather died. I wonder why I choose to do bad things.

Every day I wonder why these things have happened to me. Did I do something wrong in a past life? I wonder why a lot more things, like I wonder why I can't be with my family when they need me the most. There is no explanation about why these things have happened, but sometimes I wonder why.

Why do people have to be going through so many hard things just to get one good moment in life? I still don't get it, and only hope it gets better. Sometimes I wonder...

-Maile

From The Beat: We don't think you go through all these hard times "just to get one good moment in life." Instead, we think it's like investing in a bank account. You put in a little money every week or month — money which you would really like to spend on yourself right now, but you decide to sacrifice for a payoff down the line — and after a while, you have built up a cushion of support that let's you live decently for much more than just a moment. You are making that investment in your future by addressing your drug problem squarely and putting it behind you. That's the best investment you can make in your future, and we believe the questions you have will change as your life changes. As for your step dad raping you, that is a crime and should not go unpunished! Have you told any adults (besides The Beat) about this? Is he still with your mom? If he raped you, then he's very likely to rape other young girls, and that is just not acceptable. How are you handling this problem?

I wonder why I was raped by my step dad for three years long.

Why Am I Still Here?

Sometimes I wonder why I'm still here. In my mind I don't deserve to be here. I've broke all the rules of life. Maybe God really has a purpose for me, but why? What makes me so special? Is it the fact that I had the courage to keep running over my loved ones with regal grace? Well I'm here... Just tell me why?

-Paulette

From The Beat: No one can get into the Mind of God, so no one can tell you what His purpose might be for you. Could it be that your purpose in life is to find your purpose in life? We would encourage you, rather than trying to answer those profound but unanswerable questions, that you concentrate on what you are in Walden House for. All the questions of the universe become that much easier to deal with when you have a clear mind.

RIP Paco

My homeboy died when he was 42. This person was the best friend I ever had because he always had my back and kept me out of trouble. He saved my life a few times. He saved me from getting raped. He saved me from getting turned out to the dope game at too young of an age. He saved me from committing serious crimes, but yet he wasn't over protective. I love and miss him with all of my heart and always will. RIP Paco

-Lil' Taco

From The Beat: We're sorry about your loss, Lil' Taco. You didn't explain how he died. Was it the violence of the streets that took him, or more natural causes? What would he be advising you right now if he could come back for a few minutes and sit and talk with you?

Losing My Mind For Real

I lost my mind in the hall. I actually really lost my mind. I was sitting in my room, alone, and my breathing got really shallow. Then, the room started to close in on me. I couldn't breathe. I almost had to go to the hospital but thankfully my breathing went back to normal. I stopped crying and laughing, which I was doing all at the same time. The next day my knuckle was shattered from punching the wall and my whole body was aching. That's when I really went crazy.

-Ashly

From The Beat: This sounds like a truly frightening experience. Do you know what brought it on? Has it ever happened to you before or since? Did you seek any kind of help when this happened?

I Remember Mother

I will never forget
The way you held my hands
Whenever I had problems
You said you'd understand
And I could talk to you
And tell you my fears
Then you would comfort me
And kiss my tears away

I will never forget
They way you taught me how
To love with all my heart
I still remember now
The gentleness of you touch
I remember all these years

And I remember, Mother
The way you held your head
You held it high with pride
Not bending low instead
I will never forget
The love you gave so freely
And the strength and faith you carried
Is now a part of me!

-Lacey

From The Beat: You are way too young to remember, but early in television's history, there was a show called "I Remember Mama." Your piece reminds us of that. How will you show your mother what she has meant to you over the years? Telling her is important, but deeds always count more than words!

Losing My Mind

One time I lost my mind when I went to jail. I lost my mind and I started to kick the doors and scream and stuff like that until I got a phone call.

-Peaches And Cream

From The Beat: This sounds more like a child's temper tantrum than truly losing your mind.

I Can't Believe

I can't believe
Wow.
I made it this long in rehab.
It's been seven weeks.
I can't believe I made it this long without no AWOL
I can't believe
I haven't talked to any of my family, friends and my love
Who's just my friend now.
I can't believe I found another here. I found a few others.
I can't believe
I found a couple that really want me.
I may want them, who knows? But I'm not really thinking about that.
I want to be with someone dear.
I can't
I've been hurt too, treated kind
Confused in the world, but I'm still here
About to be out in two
I can't believe

-Doloris

From The Beat: Congratulations for sticking it out this long without running. Maybe you are turning a corner in your life so that you will walk away from one life and walk into another!

Have You Ever Lost Yo' Mind?

No, but I snap from time to time... "Yo' boy! don't mess wit me!..." Well yeah, I did once... I lit ol' boy tires on fire, broke all his windows and was screaming "Where she at!" Man my man was creepin' with my girl.

-Maria

From The Beat: Did you really lose your mind, or just lose your temper?



What Keeps You up At Night

I stay up at night because I have a lot of stuff on my mind about my situation that I'm here and I will think hard.

-Peaches And Cream

From The Beat: This falls far short of being a decent Beat piece, and reveals some laziness on your part. What stuff is on your mind? What are you thinking hard about? Give us more!

Sometimes I Wonder!

Sometimes I wonder about myself, like am I ever going to make it or not. That is what I wonder.

-Peaches And Cream

From The Beat: These two-sentence pieces are a mark of laziness and lack of care. Start caring about yourself and it will be reflected in what you write. Are you going to make it? Why? Why not? What are you thinking about?

Why?

Why did I use crank?
Why did my dad beat me?
Why did I drop out of school?
Why did I give guys everything I had?
Why did I get drunk and wake up on tha' corner?
Why did I my mom leave my dad?
Why did the cops take me away from my parents?
Why do people have power over me?
Why do I have to be in rehab?
Why can't I go home?
Why did my mom kick me out?
Why?

-Lacey

From The Beat: We think that if you put your mind to it, you could come up with answers to many of these questions yourself. For example, you probably know why you have to be in rehab, and why you can't go home. We'd love to read a piece by you that attempts to answer some of these questions.

Going Crazy

At one point in my life I was crazy! I talked to people who weren't there. I thought I was a spirit. I thought people were after me. I tried to hurt people. I did hurt people. I hurt myself. I acted hecka out there.

-Lil' Taco

From The Beat: This is very interesting, Lil' Taco, but you didn't give us enough information. When did you have this episode? What brought it about? Was it your drug use, or was something else going on in your life? How did you get back into your right mind? Did you see any professional counselors or therapists? Are you taking medication? Do you still hear voices?

I'm so lonely here with out you,

Missin' you every second of the day
Hoping that time goes by
Faster than yesterday
I miss lookin' into your sexy eyes
And you lookin' straight into
Mine
Its like you are my drug
My addiction that I just can't ignore
'Cause every day that goes by I'm needing
You even more
How am I gonna go through with all
This pain that I'm feelin'
Because this place won't let me have contact with
You
Baby, it's killin' me deep inside
Listenin' to all these sad-ass love songs
At night while I lay in bed just thinkin'
'Bout you boo
Man, these people just don't understand
That I need you and that
You are the only one I have by my side
Shhh, I ain't got my momma or ma daddy
The system took them away from me
And now they tryin' to take you too
I can't handle this anymore
What more do they
Want from me?
I'm not gonna give up on you
Baby
'cause without you baby I'm goin' crazy!

-Lil' Skizz

From The Beat: We're sorry you have to deal with the loss of freedom, the loss of love, and confronting a drug problem all at the same time. But we also worry that love can be exactly like a drug addiction (as you wrote), where you look outside yourself for fulfillment. We don't know about your love, so we can't say whether it's good or bad, but we don't think your being without him is killing you. Instead, just like the absence of your drug of choice, we think it's making you stronger. You may well end up with this person in a loving relationship, but the first order of business is to get comfortable with yourself so that your decisions are based on what's good for Lil' Skizz, and not what's good for others.

Behind These Walls

As I sit here behind these walls I wonder if I'm a loser
 'Cause everything around me seems so strange,
 I don't know — should I change?
 Change my life, change my ways,
 So I can stay alive a few more days,
 A few more days, a few more nights,
 For you babe is who I need in my life,
 I need your love, I need your care,
 But most of all I need you there,
 There when I'm down, so you can turn my frown upside
 down,
 My love for you has grown stronger in here,
 I don't know why, but it feels so right,
 Till next time I'll sit here wondering behind these walls...

R. PEREZ We remember having this stellar writer in our workshops and now he's eighteen and unfortunately finds himself in the Santa Clara County Jail in San Jose, CA. He forgot our address but had his brother send it to him so he can write us. Thanks bro, we appreciate it... This week he drops a poem on us about what goes through his mind and he's locked 'Behind These Walls'. We're sure a lot of our readers can relate so please read on. As for the writer, we love hearing from you so don't hesitate to fill us in from time to time.

I don't know — should I change?

Change my life, change my ways,

So I can stay alive a few more days

RICHARD L. Writing from one of the hardest Youth Authority institutions to do your time in (N.A. Chaderjian in Stockton, CA), we bring you a young man with the amazing gift of knowing how to string words together. This week he hits us with a poem about what it's like to live in his shoes. And though it's shorter than what we're used to, it speaks volumes. So fasten your seatbelts and enjoy the ride of 'To Be Like Me.'

To Be Like Me

To be like me, you'd have to think like me
 Do what you want to do, live life freely
 Watch things with my eyes, see things that I see
 Look at my suffering and pain, that's why I be how I be
 Wake up in my shoes and look at life from my view
 See the hatred in me, that's why I do what I do
 Even though I have a home, I call the streets my home
 Chillin' with fake ass punks who left me alone
 But I still love the streets, that's where I learned to be a
 kid
 There was never no rules, that's why I did what I did
 If my dad was a man, I'd probably be one too
 Instead of being locked down staring at my life thru my
 rear view

If my dad was a man, I'd probably be one too
 Instead of being locked down staring at my
 life thru my rear view

RAMIRO ENRIQUEZ The California Youth Authority is supposed to be rehabilitating our youth. It changed its name to California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation for crying out loud. Well, as you'll see from this next piece, it's only teaching our youth how to be more hard and show less emotion. For though this next writer explains a lot of the pain he's going through, his title, "Still Not A Tear" suggests that he'll continue to show his serious side without revealing what's really eating at him because he'll be too vulnerable. The poem is a great one and he writes from Preston Youth Correctional Facility in Lone, CA. (Damn, where's that?)

Still Not A Tear

Today I went to court, took a plea bargain for five years,
 I haven't lost all hope they can't make me shed a tear,
 See I believe that there's a reason why God has put me
 here,
 They shackled up my feet with little walking space,
 Handcuffs on my wrist, double chain around my waist
 They put me in the van with thick windows and a steel
 fence
 I'm already all chained up in my mind it makes no sense
 They talked in front of me as if I wasn't even there
 I know I don't belong here but no one seems to care
 As I arrived at court I remembered being home chillin' with
 the fellas
 Drinking beer, blowing smoke, selling sacks for dough

And knew for years to come this wouldn't be no more
 Getting all lit staying up late out looking for violence
 How not a day went by in the hood without listening to
 sirens

As I looked up at the judge he had a bored and tired look
 He said give him five years he's just another crook
 But then I thought about what really matters to me
 Angela my love, Joshua my son and the rest of the family
 Now a few months have gone by and there is only few who
 write

What happened to the ones who said they'd love me all the
 time,

And what about my baby momma who said always 'till the
 end of time

Or what about them beautiful young ladies I made love to
 all night

And what about them down ass homies who were always
 down to ride

As I sit down in Y-A and write this

Everyday I fight this

Situation that I got

Damn it how I miss you son

I wish I was out tonight

Now with this five year plea bargain sentence

What's next, my gang-bangin risk to get a life sentence

CHARLES FLASH Realizing some of the things we get involved in are detrimental usually doesn't come until after we're already suffering the consequences, which some times can come way too late. However, every experience can offer a lesson, and in retrospect the hardest things we've had to deal with are most likely the ones that teach us the most. This next writer is going through that as we speak and we hope he can find a way to get back to his girlfriend and his child and stay with them. He's writing from a group home in Oakdale, CA.

My Life

The days of my life only one day at a time, my girlfriend is pregnant with two months to go. The love that I have for both is much more than a lifetime can give me, I'm happy with my girlfriend and do as much for her and my unborn son that I can. Then time goes by, we moved from a trouble city to a new place.

I came from the hard side of The Bay Brea. I had to make change. I want more for my child than I had. My child doesn't need the trouble in his life the way I did, so I can keep him away from gangs and drugs — also more things that will hurt us, I'm from The Bay Area but I don't need to live like it anymore.

LIL' SPANKS

Going through things that are harsh can sometimes seem never ending. Especially when you're leading a life that many people are employed to watch over. It's hard to get out of the system fully, once you're already a part of it. This is what this next writer hits us with as he comes with a magnificent poem depicting that harsh reality. And as he goes on about what's going on it saddens us because doing this work we realize that it probably is never ending. People will always fill jails because it's a vast industry in this country, so the only thing we can do is make sure we don't add to 'their' job security individually. Everything else is virtually out of our hands. He's writing from the Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, CA.

Never Ends

Take me away 'cause I ain't happy here,
I fought my fears,
Lost a few homies but shed no tears.
I hold 'em back,
And I cry inside so you can't follow the tracks,
On the reals,
I keep myself cold, and never show that my heart can feel.
I've known my boys all my life but ain't no love on my
block,
And you wonder what gives birth to such evil thoughts,
This shhh is crazy but our world is what it is,
I can't trust my own homies so I keep 'em at a five-foot
distance
And that's the truth written in cold-blood,
Soy como soy Lil' Spanks forever keeping it thug,
Regardless of where I stand today,
'Cause the world knows of where I stood,
Mob ways,
Lil' Spanks, pushin' through your hood,
Servin' candy from out the waist,
Got you knockin' on wood,
But when the tables turned and the homie fell, who was
there?

Lil' Spanks on my own,
As pistol smoke and blood smothered the air,
I watched my boy's soul, get ghost and walked to hell,
Those memories so vivid won't shake from my mind,
'Cause Lord knows how hard I cried,
And the broken tears that I hide,
My only brother took the easy escape from life,
I can't be mad, it gots to be better wherever he's at,
Ain't no love where I'm from
Killas get killed, and still it don't bring 'em back,
So wounds never heal and that's real
But life goes on, living life so wrong, blown!
There goes another walkin' time bomb,
Waitin' patiently for the moment to activate the hate,
boom!
You're doomed,
Deadly embraced, by your fate, but hold on...
It ain't over now,
Gots to keep pushin', gots to keep strivin'
And if ya' don't know, I'm gonna show you how,
I see pistols still blazin', still smokin',
Souls exit from bullet holes,
And turn their backs on doors that been open,
Ask me why and I can't tell ya' cause I ain't knowin'
Clappers clappin', relaxin', sleepin' with heaters,
Ain't nothin' free, but dreams, so I remain a poor dreamer,
And sometimes, when the night comes,
I'm afraid to sleep,
I hear the screams in my dreams
Wakin' up trippin', thinkin', that my celly's even creepin'
on me,
It's my guilty conscience playin' tricks on me,
So the shhh never ends,
Clocks tickin' away my life in the pen.
One love, one thug.

I didn't run, they had guns out and I thought they might shoot me

CARL

This next first time writer was introduced to us by our dear friend and old colleague, Efty Sharony. He's writing from the Highland Juvenile Center in Highland, NY, so this poem has traveled a very long way. He gives us a 'glimpse' of the life he led and a little bit about how he feels. We can tell he's very talented and want to accept here at The Beat as one of our own. In his letter he says he writes stories, poems, or whatever else — he can write it all. We are really looking forward to seeing him in our pages more consistently, so hopefully our slow turn around doesn't discourage him from writing us. Great piece, Carl...

Glimpse

Let me put my thoughts which I've conceived through life
The pickings of my brain like a vultures delight
In the past it was nothing but fighting and stealing
Gats was peeling didn't care how no one was feeling
Smoking weed on the regular treating my body cruel
Busting down eighteen packs while I was cutting out
school
Moms was usin' too, my father met his death
My grandma developed cancer, what the hell I got left?
People are dying, the twin towers are falling
I see no answers in religion, God where is my calling?
The streets are appealing sexy chicks in mini skirts
While ugly girls and losers all going church
Moms packed up our bags, moved to a new place
But the kids were the same, crime at a fast pace
Got down with the wolf pack like
Mowgli from Jungle Book
Learned how to weigh crack and
And let the coke cook on the streets
Wasn't the only one on the streets who was hungry for
money
Couple times they tried to run up

And take my stuff from me
Wasn't wit' it though, my boys all stood by my side
Whether we'd won or we'd lost I knew I had my pride
Went back to the corner selling drugs to my patients
But I had to be careful, judge put me on probation
Then I had a girl in my life to give me hope
One to hold me through all the hard times like a rope
Made me wanna do good get an education
Go to school and keep myself away from the police
situation
Life style wouldn't change though, too entertained by
doing wrong
Still smoking and drinking staying out 'till dawn
On and on day after day, I started letting my girl down
Promiscuous relationships all over town
Finally they got me. Cops locked me
I didn't run, they had guns out and I thought they might
shoot me
Went through the court thing and I got locked up
Lost everything and yet still problems pop up
I want my teenage years and my H.S. diploma
Complications getting out, feeling like my life's over
They tryin' to change my bad ways
Keep me out of town
Get my life on track and stop messin' around
And I fear for myself for the chance I may fail
'Cause try as I may I've been yet to prevail
Working diligently towards a plan to advocate my success
If I'm good at bad I could be good at good, more or less
So what I've gotta do is keep doing
If I fall get up
'Cause the best thing for me to do is keep my head up.

Random Wisdom

Inside this soul I have felt the grace of God. I have found what I sought for so long. I walked the earth step by step with one question on my mind. Why?

I have walked many paths and I have fallen many times. But each time I fall I get right back up and search again.

A maze of life, the end is the gift of understanding. A vaccine to the question that plagues us all. In the maze the Minotaur chases us with its innocence of deception in hopes to swallow us whole into its belly. We run from our fears and responsibilities. We must slay this demon that chases us so that those who follow can find their way without the fear of temptation. We can be leaders, lights in the deepest of darkness shining light like a beacon of hope for all to see. Oh how hard it must have been for Christ but it was done. Through him it can be done again. This is what I have found — the beginning to my path of enlightenment.

I have walked many paths and
I have fallen many times. But
each time I fall I get right back
up and search again.

Random Wisdom

Life. This, in general, sums up the existence of physical creation. Life also represents a certain way of existence.

Death. This, in general, sums up the end of all things of the physical creation. Death also represents the existence of living without a soul.

To live for life one would be a creator to help advance the human race. To live for death one would be a destroyer of the human race.

To live for life is to be seen as a soul of light that imparts its ingenuity upon the world. To live for death the soul will be seen as a threat and would be avoided until destroyed or seen as a destroyer against evolving.

What you do when you live is your choice. That is our gift from God himself. But when you abuse this gift you have then shown God that you do not deserve wisdom.

Life is to test the soul. Death is to destroy it.

JEREMY TOWNER A very influential writer and 'have you on the edge of your seat' storyteller is back on the prowl after being MIA for a little while. This next installment comes with three commentaries from his own mind and a poem that knocked us out of our seats. And although his 'random wisdom' is incredible, we'd still like to see him publish another story in The Beat. For his last, 'Con-flicted' is still the buzz around the office and it's already been close to a month since we dropped the last chapter. Word around here is that he has a new fantasy book, 'The Sword Of The Sun' coming out. Hopefully he'll drop it on us all at once so we can run them a chapter at a time consistently like we did with his last book. This man is very, very talented and has made a name for himself in our pages rather quick. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. And Jeremy, at least five of us are awaiting another story. That's the mark of a great storyteller — they always leave you wanting more...

Being The One

In each of our individual lives we will be introduced to lessons in the how and why. Young we will be when we taste of the fruit from the forbidden tree. So swept the temptation that we become blind to the poison within. And with each bile we die little by little into a pit of despair. Seeing the dangers that lie ahead but trying to swim around our confrontations we drown in panic flailing our arms of desperation trying to find some purchase on which to hold on.

But all that could save you is past. Our refusal for help because of our pride to be the one. No one can swim against that current of death and survive. Many have tried and die and some have gone further than others. But not one soul has beaten the devil at his own game. Fragile minds with indestructible dreams we drink of wishes from the empty chalice filling our souls with longing. It is as if I was reaching out of the sea with my arm outstretched and a cry for help upon my face. Looking to the heavens for the answers that I already know. My heart speaks with its beat and tells me to live.

Forget this false dream of grandeur. And live in peace because if you strive for what you can't have you will waste your lessons in life and die trying to satisfy the temptation of being the one.

My Bag Of Dignity

I had a bag of dignity
It was filled to the brim
I gave it away so freely
Just to make some friends

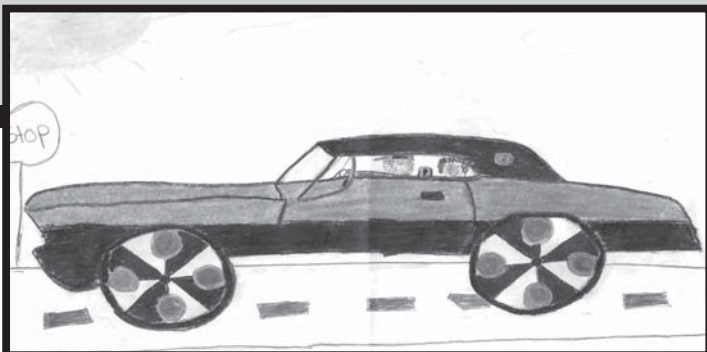
I had so much that
I gave some away
To show that I was cool
If only for a day

Come everyone and look at me
Being really cool
Be my fake friend today
And I will be the fool

Tell me what you'd like to see
It is what I'll strive to be
But now my bag is empty
Stripped of its dignity.

I had so much dignity
That I ran out my share
With not a worry as to myself
Or a selfish thoughtless care

I had too much dignity
In my bag of tricks
And I gave it all to a world
That didn't give a shhh



SAMUEL CAPERS

After being along for the ride as Silent Sam Capers — now Sammy Caps — kept us up to date on his death penalty trial, we now have his first piece from his new “home” on the dreaded Death Row at San Quentin State Prison. Besides his greetings from Death Row, Sammy first lays out a terrifying scenario in “Winter Heat”: A child is beaten, his mother murdered, his father a suicide! We can only hope this is not his own story... and yet we know it is someone's story, that some child, whether Sammy or not, endured this brutal experience, absorbed it, and then, with a child's mind, had to try to make sense of it. The adult takes over in Chapter One of his autobiography, which ends tragically, emphasizing the unpredictability and fragility of life. And finally, “Regrets” — the consequences of a gang life that gets cut off in its prime without a future — other than that of a caged animal...

What's Up Beat?

It's ole “Sammy Caps” formerly known as Silent Sam droppin' a few lines your way. First off, I'd like to send a saludos to all the staff there, as well as to the readers and BWO writers as well. Ok, my bad! Too many “as wells” but y'all get the picture.

So check it out, I'm now here in good ole San Quentin, on Death Row. To be honest, how can all of you from the Bay Area stand this cold weather? It's apparent that folks up this way are used to it!! Like those of us from the City of Angels are used to life threatening smog and stray bullets. But I must say, it's beautiful out here and my respect to those from the S.F. Bay Area.

Now that I'm settled, I would like to start puttin' it down for the mag on a regular basis. My trial is behind me and my appeals won't start for about four to five years. So those of you out there will be hearing a lot from me. I consider you all my brothers and sisters in solidarity. Whether you're in the halls, the “Y,” the Bay or here on the shelf, we are all in the same situation. Though sadly, some such as myself, will never have a chance at changing situations again.

What has happened to me, has not yet fully hit me, given I've only been here since 9/25/06. But it took a long time for me to “accept” my situation. The fact of the matter is that it's going to take me a bit to adjust to my environment. That's why I'll spend the first two years in the Adjustment Center to fully grasp the reality, which I now face. Then sent to East Block to program around others. The way they have the program set up kind of sucks. But what more can I do? Just go with the flow. That's what.

A few shouts out to those scammed at the local Juvenile hall, Mike Kroll, my lil' primo Pico (he's in Folsom), the home girls up in V.S.P.W. & C.C.W.F. Osito and Raccoon in WVDC, not to mention my mamma Staci Gaines, pops Leslie Gaines, and my knuckle-headed-ass bros, Antonio, Cub, Calvin, Kevin, precious lil' sister, Desiree, and the baby of the family, my heart and everything lil' Rikki, Tia April, primo Josh and Prima Jazzy. To those out there on the calles or walkin' the yardas, keep this short but heavy sayin' in mind:

“Grow bigger than your disappointments,” from the author Victor Villaseñor in his book Rain Of Gold. And let's not forget the song, “Don't let nobody get you down!” Let me go ahead and shut up! Much love to you all...stay strong!

Winter Heat

(Dedicated to Ismael “Pico” Montes)

Pain searing through his body, Joe Joe tried to crawl under his brother's 2006 Yukon, pushing hard to avoid the blows of his father's thick braided, leather belt. Blood ran down the welts on his copper toned back and cascading at the waist of his Levi's, giving it a dark purple tint.

He felt a strong hand grab at his left ankle. His body yanked with such force, lil' Joe Joe lost his breath. Looking up, his father hovers above him, staring down at his boney 110 pound body. Hatred in his eyes, his father resumes the beating.

“Daddy why? I thought you loved me!” To his left, his mama lays in a bloody heap. Her tattered and stained clothes hang limply off of her body, her eyes, void of all life.

“Mommy!” Joe Joe cries. But his voice is no longer there. “Mommy!!” He screams with silent anguish.

“I have to get strong,” he thinks, “strong like a brown eagle and fly away from here. Far away.” But his body won't move. His father, who always said he loved him and his mama, stops. He turns his back and comes back with a chrome plated .45 automatic

“Daddy! No!” screams Joe Joe. A bang, and his father falls over. “No! Oh no!” Joe Joe cries. “Mami y papi! No!”

He crawls to his papi and holds him and cries, kissing him on his cheek, asking him why, why did he do this. To his left he sees his mami. He makes his way toward her. Reaching her, he lays her head in his lap, stroking her long blood-caked hair. He cries and cries. First his brother Phillip, and now his mami and papi.

In the distance he hears the sirens approach with speed. His heart drops to the pit of his stomach. He had to get out of there. He wasn't about to be put in foster care.

“CPS ain't gonna hold me down,” Lil' Joe Joe thought. “Never that!” With all the courage he could conjure, he got up, ran out the back door and hopped the back gate to the alley.

Lil' Joe Joe was 10 years old.

So check it out, I'm now
here in good ole San
Quentin, on Death Row.

Regrets

Here I sit surrounded
Behind brick and stone
For I am a lost prisoner
Taken from my home...

This is the place I live
And a place I will stay
As wasted years go by
My face starts to age

Caught up within this system
Slammed in a lil' cell
This place ain't a prison
It's a mad taste of hell...

My life is now a number

With a picture I.D.
When they identify me...

Twisted up in this sick web
Tryin' to kill one another
Knives bricks and chains
Sawed off gauges of thunder

North or South, Crip or Blood
Homies, it's all the same
Yup, this is what I get
For running with gangs

All the crimes committed
All bad that I did
It was the life I chose
A life as a ghetto kid

No longer know the free world

Can't remember what it's like
Dead time running crazy
No hope or no light....

My smiles are fake
My laughs are unreal
Encased in tomb
A casket of concrete and steel...

Cry out to God
But my words hit the floor
So this is society's way
Of evening the score?

Stressing hard every day
With no escape in sight
Knowing it's way too late
To live my life right..

Autobiography: Chapter One

The year was 1991. It was a year of serious change. Not only in the way society thought, dressed and acted, but a change in life's unconditional morality. The old school hip hop days of run DMC and Grand Master Flash were left behind. The young put away their boom boxes and savvy dance moves and picked up the world's worst inventions: The 40 ounce and the gun.

Los Angeles, California, was the first to adopt the gang culture. Though it always existed, it had never gotten as out of hand as it was during this new century. Drive-by shootings and crack cocaine claimed the lives of ghetto folk, as well as the civilians of the communities around the city. World politics and flamboyant life styles took control of the human mind. This is the year death began to really make its name.

Cesar Zapata Lopez sat in his sky blue 1984 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme. During the wee hours of the early morning, the barrio was far from quiet. It was like nobody knew the meaning of sleep. The streets and alleyways were littered with garbage, old mattresses and old 1970 television sets. The entire scene duplicated a carbon copy of a rundown area in Tijuana, Mexico. Yet, this was Eastside Sixty-Second Street's Barrio. Not to mention there was absolutely nothing nice nor safe about this part of town. Whether a local or visitor, your odds of being safe were none. Thirty percent of the homes on the East side had boarded up windows and dirt front yards. The only signs of families who took up residence in those homes were the clothes lines strung across from tree to tree, not to mention the scent of government canned pork being fried on electric hot plates and burnt corn tortillas.

Cesar Zapata Lopez sat with as much patience of a pit bull. "Mad Dog" was the name given to him by the homies when he was jumped into the 'hood seven years earlier. Seven long years in the war zone was shown, dug deep into the crags of his weathered, dark brown face. At nineteen years old, Mad Dog was labeled not only by rival gangs, but the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Departments gang detail unit as the most feared youngster from Sixty-Second. His thin goatee, shaved head, capped off with thick black eye brows and jade green eyes, he was the up-and-coming shot caller for the Murder Alley Boys, a branch off from the main neighborhood.

Mad Dog's three brothers were all doing time in state prison. Solo, who was 20, had a very long term, home up in Crescent City, California confined to a "High Security" unit. Termite was pulling a fifteen year stretch in Susanville, Cal. for shooting a L.A. Deputy in the back when the cop kicked his lil' homie Happy in the face while they had him cuffed behind his back during a traffic stop. Lalo was on Death Row, up in San Quentin, for the murders of five dudes from a rival gang. He was found guilty of choppin' them down point blank with an AR-15 fully automatic assault rifle. They were known as the Lopez brothers, highly respected and greatly feared.

Slapping the steering wheel, Mad Dog finally lost his patience.

"What's taking this jaina so long," glancing over at his road dog Chano.

Chano, who was born Victor David Juarez Mendoza, stood at 5'9, 180 lbs, brown eyes and dark black hair. He grew up with Mad Dog in the 'hood, got jumped in the same night, shared their first bottle of wine and was devirginized by the same jaina. He was a spitting image of Mad Dog except for the difference in eye color.

Patiently, Chano shrugged and replied, "Ay fool, you know how the homegirls get more action at scoring a better issue. Tu sabes. pero, don't tell me you ain't in it for FERIA, homie, and if you are..." He smiled, leaving the rest to hang.

"It ain't that, Compa. It just these broads in this day and age," Mad Dog continued, "ain't as loyal as some of the older home girls was back in the days. Check it out, homes. Back then if a vato told his jaina to jump, she'd say, 'How high daddy?'"

Mad Dog and Chano laughed. "You gots to realize," continued Chano, "that with all that women's right bullshh, and equal opportunity trash, these broads is hollering, Ceasar. These broads think they were men."

"Madre De Dios! A gang of them look like straight men!" Mad Dog said dying with laughter. Chano went on. "Look at the homegirl Haker! With a name like that, you'd think she'd be this creamy thighed, Azteca bomb shell. Pero Chales! All you gots to do is give a horse's tail on her top lip, and she'd look like a twin brother of Pancho Villa! Pobrecita! I mean, favors homie, when she paroled out of Chowchilla, she had more ink under her skin than all the homies in the system put together!"

"You know you want to hook up, Fool!" Joked Mad Dog.

"Oh, I'll hook up. But you have to take me to get counseling when it's all over," Chano replied and made a sour face.

Mad Dog, holding back his laughter warned, "Aye homie, don't let her hear you say that. She gots chunc'ems like Mike Tyson and put that Ali vato to shame!" She or he!

"You mean it," Chano replied.

"What the hell?" Mad Dog mumbled, as he stared up the block.

"Que?" Chano said suddenly with a serious yet dangerous glint in his eyes. "Who's that vato?" Chano pointed. He nor his lifetime friend knew him. Before he spoke again, Chano was out of the car. "Ay fool, where you...."

Before he could finish the sentence, shots rang out from all directions. Fire engulfed Chano's body. Falling sideways, he looked up at the early morning sky as a mist of red, his own blood, shaded the half moon that shined down on them.

Mad Dog, starting the ride, slammed the gear shift into reverse looking for his dog Chano's lifeless body laid still on the trash littered black top in the pool of his own blood. Tears stung his eyes and he punched the accelerator. The car jerked suddenly backwards. The shots continued as he drove almost forty miles an hour lookin' over his shoulder trying not to hit anything.

Several blocks away, Mad Dog stopped and got out with a .380 automatic held limply at his side. Nobody was around to see him cry. The tears ran freely down his cheeks. "Not Chano, not Chano," he said over and over again. Getting back into the car, he lit a cigarette. Without taking a drag, Mad Dog buried his face in his hands and wept bitterly for the friend he had grown up with in the barrio.

The sting of hate ran through his body like bites from ants. He vowed revenge. He will pay them back. An eye for an eye. But who were they? They had to die. But first, Morena... She did this! Mad Dog's fiancée had set them up...

(to be continued)

The sting of hate ran through his body like bites from ants. He vowed revenge. He will pay them back.
An eye for an eye. But who were they?

SHAI ALKEBU-LAN If you're into epic love stories that keep you on the edge of your seat, then we suggest you read this next writer very carefully. Every now and then we have to sit back in awe to take in all of this talent. Every now and then we're reminded that most of our talent is locked up and that people are so bland out here. Creativity gets lost in the everyday routine of life and isn't appreciated in the land of high speed internet and cell phones. Well, if we were to put all the technology away and just survive on our minds and hearts this next writer would be one of the most successful people we know. Taking us on a journey through a long lost love he's still searching for 25 years later, Shai blesses us with a riveting tale of love found and love lost. He's writing from California State Prison in Vacaville, CA, and we hope he finds her again. If you're reading this Kimmy, please let him know you're still out there. If not, we hope fate can put its powerful hands to work.

I Would Call Kimmie A. And Say

Dearest Kim,

Hello little sister. Wow! It has been twenty-two years, since we talked on the campus of San Francisco State University. I have never forgotten you or how beautiful you were to me. I hope you are well. I have always wondered what had happened to you. I too have had lots of growing up to do. Yet I pray your life has turned out to be everything you strived for it to be. Much love and respect to you, Kim. Hey, did you ever become a night nurse?

In the case you are wondering who I am? Where did we meet? How I know you? Or how you know me? Let me refresh your memory?

First we grew up together in Santa Cruz County. I'd spend every summer on the beach boogie boarding and hoping someone would teach me to surf. My family got a house 4300 Scotts Valley Drive, across from Stagnaro's Liquor Store. I think, at one time, we were the only African American family in Scott's Valley.

I played football at Cabrillo College and before I got my scholarship to San Francisco State University, it was then I saw Kim, the most beautiful girl in Scott's Valley. Are you shaking your leg and wiggling your foot? You have a tendency to do that whenever we talk, or are you giving that gorgeous smile, when you're happy someone cares for you? I have always cared for you since you were at least (16) and I always will. Does this refresh your memory a little? I'll continue, if you don't mind.

One day on the Scott's Valley bus, we spoke. I was a bit shy. As the bus got to your stop, you got off. I remember Rick, the bus driver say, "Shai, go walk her home. She lives just right there. For God's sake." You turned into your yard. (At the end of the bus line) Rick got on my case saying, "The next time the both of you are on the bus, walk her home."

After that summer, I started my senior year in the fall '82 at San Francisco State University. It was there that we finally got a chance to really meet. I was walking to the student union store, for my supplies for my (park ranger internship) when you came into view.

As I walked in the student union you shot right passed me — and I was so convinced it was you. Suddenly, you made an abrupt about face — I thought you were going to run into me — so I did everything to keep my backpack from hitting you. However, the gorgeous woman was you. Yet I had seen you many times while going to + fro, from my job near the marina. Your smile was so radiant.

I was glad to see you in San Francisco. We had a really nice conversation. I gave you my business card and told you if you need anything come by and see me at work. You seemed really happy when we spoke. I never saw you smile the way you did that day either. We had finally met.

The last thing I remember, I was whispering in your ear saying "I had the biggest crush on you from the first day I saw you and I've been in love with you from a far ever since."

I asked if you wanted to go out boogie boarding. I must admit that kiss I planted on you, along with our dialogue went down in the annals of San Francisco State University history, because we had an audience. A couple of people approached me begging me to tell them what I said to you that made you so happy. Maybe you can tell me.

After 22 years, I finally figured it out. We were from Santa Cruz, and the only family we had up there. Plus, the fact I told you, "Kim, you have the sexiest two big and baby

Dear Beat Within

I am writing the following article in response to the last topic for volume 11.24. I received your weekly and I pray you print the story

First, my name is Shai Alkebu-Lan. I am from Santa Cruz, CA. Yet grew up in Los Angeles, CA my 6-12 grade years. I loved Santa Cruz County. But my economical opportunities as a recreational and social science-humanities professional were greater in a big city-county like Los Angeles.

Hence, this is where I caught my case, protecting my child and I from a sexual predator deviant, an animal photographer for Jet Magazine, while returning from my son's tee-ball game which team I managed.

Secondly, if I had anybody's phone number who would "I" call and why?

Please see attached

Lastly, I am also an author of a periodical-short story in your weekly volume 10.26 page 52. I am now in California Medical Facility, and I'm working as a clerk, also I'm dread and alive!

toes I've ever seen on a woman." Your question: No, I'm not saying you have big feet. I'm saying you have sexy toes. That is my statement and I'm sticking to it." SMILE!

We stood there in the middle of the student union, our cheeks intimately pressed against each other. I told you, "If for some reason, due to my internship, we never get to see each other, always remember me and this wonderful moment we shared right here today. Don't let anyone or anything, take or run this precious moment from us.

"If we remember this day — one day in the lowest, saddest and loneliest times of our lives, we shall think of each other and the love we shared this day. It will lift our spirits and no matter where we are in this world our spirits will know who's calling and we'll never ever feel alone. I love you, Kim! Will you promise me this? And let's get together then"

I never expected your answer, but you said, "Yes, I promise. But, did you really mean that? That was a nice thing to say. No one ever said anything like that to me." Then, I kissed you.

I told you, "I meant it with all my heart I got to go." We departed ways and I've never seen you since that time. I felt a million years pass by that moment. I looked up at my surroundings and noticed the whole student union was focused upon our interaction. I poured my heart out that day. Your love made sure I didn't crash and burn.

While I was in the student store, your girlfriend came up to me saying, "What did you say to her!" I just said, "We were from the same town." She went on, "Where do you know her from? She is my friend and I just don't want her to get hurt." I only wanted us to hold a special place in our hearts and I think I did something right. I really respected her for that, because she loved you as much I did. (Your friend that is)

Then, someone else came, while I stood in line. She said, "What did you say to that girl. The blonde, the woman over there. I don't know what you said, but it must have been really good. She hasn't taken her eyes off you. How do you really feel about her?"

I told her, "I've been in love with her since I was a teenager." Actually since I was ten, you sucker punched me over a bag of taco flavored Doritos which I hadn't paid for yet. You were at least this angel asked me one last time, "Did you tell Kim that? She needs to know. Would you like me to talk to her for you?" then she pointed at you.

I said, "Yeah! Kim is a hard nut to crack." I looked at you for just a moment and that angel was gone. I hoped she did whisper in your ear. I do know this, that angel got her wings that day. So, do you remember me now? Or have I crashed and burned?

Kim, I was told one day at my job that you came by. However, no one told me it was you. Nor did they give me a name. All I knew was a good looking woman came to the community center saying, she was my girl. I broke out laughing, because I wanted to meet this woman! But, was it

continued on next page

continued from previous page
you that came to the center?

Kim, I want to apologize for missing you when/if you did come by. I was a senior at SFSU and very busy that semester. I was going from one class, to work, to class. Another job, home, class and then Scott's Valley, only to work weekends at the China Café. I barely had time to study let alone sleep.

The laundry woman, Mrs. Moon said, "A beautiful girl came by with her friend." You told her we were engaged or something. Now, that I think about it I told you to say it, so they'd treat you nice.

But I still didn't know who it was, I had no name, number, address. I had no real female friends, until I met you at SFSU.

Kim, baby, help me out here

1983, the spring semester, I did my internship as a park ranger. I was on campus once a week and at the center twice a week. I found out that one of the people I supervised was not giving me your messages. Ms. Moon told me. I'm sorry things turned out like that, Kim. That's why I was always protective of you and told you what to say to keep the vampires away. However, you were a big girl and had to do your own growing up.

Anyway, I couldn't find you, nor did I know where to look. Finally, I saw that leaving San Francisco was best after graduation, and kicking Terry's ass, for what he said about you, and not giving me your message.

I returned to Santa Cruz, worked for the county. Then I moved to Los Angeles and got my ranger job for the city of Santa Monica.

In 1988, I completed the academy for the national park service (rangers) and on the way back home, I stopped in Scott's Valley, CA. Rick, the bus driver was over my cousin's house. He and my cousin were proud of me. He wanted me to drive the bus but I had a job in L.A County.

I stopped by your mom's house. She was as nice and pretty as she was, when I was a kid too. I had a nice conversation with her. She told me you had not been back in Scott's Valley in years. Nor did she know when you'd be back. I was a bit worried. Yet she let me leave you a message.

She asked me, "Where do you know Kim from?" do you remember her telling you some big African American guy came to see you? Smile...

I just told her, "From Scott's Valley and we graduated from San Francisco State University."

She told me also that you just disappeared and dropped out of school and out of sight. I headed back to my car, after I gave her the message for you. She called out, "Excuse me, honey, why do you want to see Kim?"

I simply said, "I've been in love with her since she was in high school" your mother walked from behind the screen door and stood on the porch holding her heart as if to say "Damn, he's the one!" Then, she smiled, reinforcing you'd get my message.

I walked to the gate and she yelled, "Honey, if she ever comes back home, I'll be sure, I promise, to give her your message."

Kim, baby, what's going on in your life? Are you married? Single? Do you have children? Are you working? May I see you again? What can I do the have you back in my life? And can you find it in your heart to forgive me for missing you by that much? At least you know I never cheated on you, or chased other women, because I've spent all my life getting my education/working, so I could have you. Yet in the hustle of acquiring one opportunity after another, I took my eyes off the prize — you, Kim.

Baby, I'm writing this letter to let you know, I want to hold the hand of the woman I've always held a special place in my mind and in my heart — not for closure.

I've done some great things in my life. However I'm

in prison for one thing not so great. On July 22, 2005, I turned 48 years old. As I lay on my cell bunk I felt I was at the lowest time in my life. I was all alone — abandoned. Then, my mind clicked in gear. I suddenly remembered the promise we made to each other. I began to reflect on that one special wonderful moment in my life which we two shared together talking, laughing, flirting in the San Francisco State University student union in the fall semester of 1982.

Kim, my love, it was this memory of you, your smile, your face, your grace and your sexy toes that lifted my spirit and returned my humanity from living death to a harmonious state of mind. It came from the innermost depths of my soul, heart, and mind and the love I've always shared for you secretly locked away inside of me to be specifically called upon this day, this time. For only this occasion, to uplift our spirits and remind us both to hold on!

Thus, I am hereby motivated to write this letter to you. More importantly to find you and thank you! Kim, you are the beautiful spark of life, light, and love in my life, which no other woman could be or has ever been. I always knew you were a special woman. Maybe, I was that special man to you and why you came to visit me at work 22 years ago. "Do you remember the time?" I want you to know our promise strengthened me to excel and survive.

I pray your leg is shaking, foot wiggling and those sweet toes tingling. Do you remember me? Please believe me, I wasn't avoiding you I never got your hook-up. I wanted a relationship and life with you. That was the purpose for giving you a way to contact me when you needed me. As I now can see, you never hesitated to call. (Or drop by for me) please believe me. Fill out this visiting form, return it baby. And come share some time with me because I don't want to miss you again. When you get this letter, I pray you write soon. I want to hear from you and know all about you and what you've been doing with yourself.

Kim, this tall, dark, handsome, intelligent, hardworking, romantic, strong, loving and unselfish African American male is still crazy about you. I'd just like to hear from you. But I want you to know, I came back for you.

I pray the words of this letter as well as it's content brings back the memories of smiles on your tender lips, warms your loving heart and penetrates deep down inside to touch the soul of Kim.

Consider this, I've always wanted you and you knew it. I'm begging you don't crash and burn. This is our golden opportunity to hook up. You won't regret it. Write soon... send me some pictures of you.

The ball is in your court: pass it, shoot it, score it but never again lose it, or throw it away.

I'm waiting for you! And I need you, Kim.

I'm 6'1, 200 lbs I still have a good heart-mind-soul and health and I can't wait to get my hands on you! Do you know what I mean?

Lastly, after 22 years or more, since that day at San Francisco State University student union, when we talked. It finally dawned on me that, in the fall of 1982, you had seen me on campus all semester. Baby, you knew exactly what you were doing when you cut me off and stopped me in my tracks, then hit me with your delicious smile and pretty killer blues. You wanted me as much as I wanted you. You're a cold assassin. But I must say, I'm very impressed. You sure took me out. Why did I write you? I love you, Kim. Love and respect to you! If you are married, please tell your husband/man, I mean no disrespect I just had to find you and say "thank you" little sister and god bless. After meeting you, my life wasn't based on the number of breaths I took but on the moment, when Kim took my breath away.

You seemed really happy when we spoke. I never saw you smile the way you did that day either. We had finally met.

JAMES SANTIAGO GONZALES

A number of issues back, we published a three-part series by James Gonzales titled "Escape." We were disappointed at the end of the series which ends with a knife assault on another prisoner delivered without regrets (or explanation), and we wrote about our disappointment. In turn, James has added an "Epilogue" to the story, which puts the blame for being made callous on the California prison system which made him. But what we admire most about this piece is the description of a group of imprisoned men who, while working together to create a Christmas feast of tamales, actually create something far more valuable — a sense of community in the middle of hell. We still don't have a clear idea how he was "railroaded" into the Salinas Valley State Prison where he currently resides.

The Escape: Epilogue

To any or the many that read part 1, 2 and 3 of my story "the escape," all I can tell people is that California turned me into an animal. If I sounded "casual" in mentioning the slicing of another prisoner's neck, that's only because the prisoners themselves and the prison system has taught me and conditioned me to accept the slicing, stabbing or even killing of an inmate as "casual" — not only by what I've seen with my own eyes and heard with my own ears, but by my own personal experience in the California prison system when I first started my prison sentence in 1995 and my own throat was cut so severely I almost bled out! I felt my body numb and cold and I seen the light at the end of a long tunnel so many near-death survivors describe.

It took fifty-eight stitches for the prison's physician to suture the wound; twenty of the sutures were internal! That's how deep the wound was. They meant to kill me and my guardian angel saved my life again because I turned my head while I was fixing my pinochle cards and they barely missed my vital jugular vein. Had they hit that jugular as deep as the slice was I would have bled out in three minutes. Twenty sutures inside my neck, thirty-eight externally.

After this experience, my life was changed. I was utterly alone and on my own in the prison system, and I still had nine years to serve out. But that is a whole different story. I just want to correct the writers at The Beat. I casually mentioned my willingness and desperation to survive and never return to the state of California, doing whatever I had to in order to stay in any other state besides California. If and when I ever get to that part of the story and describe my horrific experiences I endured and survived at Mule Creek, Vacaville and Tehachapi, you will read that in fact I did escape and my plan did succeed in the long run — that I am not imprisoned by my own thinking or conditioned reflex responses.

I have a mind of my own, and I would like to get to that part of "My Life Story." But first I would like to leave readers with a happier version ending my story, "The Escape." I failed to mention what I did for Thanksgiving, 2002, and Christmas, 2002.

From 1994 to 2001, I never got a Christmas card. Not one inmate in the state of California ever got at me and showed me any love. Yet, I could hear them all giving each other things — the white boys, the Southern Mexicans, the Northern Mexicans, the blacks. I was totally and completely all alone.

After I got sliced, I did most of my time in the hole refusing to go the main line or accept any cellie. So I experienced the loneliest depressing Thanksgivings and Christmases for many years, and no one cared at all. No inmates ever even knew I existed or cared who was in "that cell." I got no letters from my family on the streets asking how I was.

Let me tell you readers, Christmas and Thanksgiving 2002 was all about family, love and freedom. Arizona. It wasn't even about the food. It was about doing something together as one. We made tamales. At least two hundred of them. There was at least sixty-eight of us in the dorm, everyone got at least one. But I got to help. It took several of us to slice the clear plastic bags into little squares. We filled up a plastic bag with tortilla chips, crushed them up, filled it with hot water to make the masa for the tamales.

We used thirteen bottles of Pico Pica Sauce. At the dinner, mostly everyone chipped in their piece of chicken. We peeled the meat off the one and put the skin in a bowl, which later we nuked and made chicharones out of.

We mixed the Pico Pica sauce with the chicken and made tamales. One would spread the masa on the plastic, pass it to the next who would spread Pico Pica and roll it into a tamale. Someone would take thirty at a time to the micro and nuke it for half an hour.

After all the tamales were done, we got rows lined up of Styrofoam cups, filled them with ice, and filled each cup with soda. We used at least twenty "Twenty- Ounce" bottles of Jalapeño Microwave Squeeze Cheese, and several bottles of mayo. It was crowded around the table, all of us eating, talking in Spanish, laughing, enjoying ourselves. That was Thanksgiving 2002.

Christmas 2002, we made a huge pizza. We got a plastic bag, filled it with top ramen soups (at least thirty soups), filled it with hot water and cooked it, flattened it out flat like pizza — a real large, thick top ramen pizza. We cooked a huge bowl of dehydrated refried beans, which was spread on the pizza as pizza sauce. We nuked a huge bowl of chopped spam that spread on the beans. We spread jalapeno wheels all over the pizza and microwave cheese. We chopped it into thick squares, and it was delicious!

We made two of them. The second pizza was made of tuna instead of spam. I got to see a bomb-ass DVD, "Pearl Harbor." I got to kick it with some good people. I got a once-in-a-lifetime experience I'll never live again. People there treated me like family, like I belonged there.

I can only guess because my family originates from Arizona and, like I said in Part 1, if I had been born in Arizona I would have been the third generation Gonzales born in AZ. The only time I ever experienced that type of feeling was at home with my dad, my uncles and my cousins. My family was very close as I was growing up with them, and that's the way people are in Arizona — very wary of people from California, but friendly with family, and I am family.

I am so sorry that what California did to me caused to cut somebody. I did solemnly swear a vow that I would never return to this state of California. I would have taken twenty year's fed time just to have stayed in the federal system and beat this three strikes case at a safe distance in the federal system, and go back to the feds confident that at least I have a parole date. But the U.S Attorney dismissed the charges against me, and they bought me back.

Now I'm at the mercy of the courts. I used to believe in the law. I used to believe in the legal system, that it was just and fair, that the legal system is colorblind. But I've come to find out it is me how was colorblind because I never stopped to take good long look at the color of my own skin until I was in my trial being railroaded in this three strikes case. It don't matter how right you are or how unjust or illegal the case against you is, if you're not the right color at the wrong time you're screwed. I can only pray now that the federal court is fair and just because my case is so prima facie reversible. It would have to be outright prejudice and discrimination for a judge to deny me habeas corpus. People have told me many times that my cause must be promising, because the court has not decided my case and it's been going on three years since it's been filed.

So here I sit in Salinas Valley. And with that I need to correct a typing error The Beat made at the end of Part 3. The Beat typed that, "California didn't get back the same person I was that escaped in August, 2003." The actual date I escaped was August 22, 2001.

Max Day Care

Is this what I grew up to be, a prisoner in a correctional institution being told when I can eat and sleep and you know. When I was a child I didn't ever think I would go to prison, but I never thought about being a drug addict either. But now I'm just a number living in a maximum security adult daycare with lots of baby sitters to tell me what to do and the sad part is the American people are paying for it.

All The Days Are The Same

All the days are the same in the chain gang. Nothing really happens here to remember a certain day. The days of memory making are over in the chain gang. Robbed of precious memories that I could have had. The days go by and years nothing changes. I'm only getting older that's all that changes.

I'm just a number living in a maximum security adult daycare with lots of baby sitters to tell me what to do and the sad part is the American people are paying for it.

Guilty

You have been found guilty by a jury of your peers.
I also see that you qualify as a prison release re-offender
and by the statute I must sentence you to the statutory maximum.
As for count 1 burglary of an unoccupied dwelling.
I sentence you to 15 years state prison
and as to count 2 felony petty theft.
I sentence you to 5 years consecutive.
A total of 20 years.
Consecutive.
I say are they crazy.
I didn't hurt no one
20 years.
I can't do 20 years I didn't hurt no one.
Child molesters are doing less time that what I got,
is there any understanding the system.
The poor man does the time.
Blinded by confusion of a system I just don't understand. I
have not laid down.
I have already given them 5 years back
and I will keep fighting until I have exhausted all of my remedies

KENNETH FLOYD

Here's a detailed account of what's going on where this next writer is. In his first piece, he describes prison as a country club where his voice is obviously sarcastic. It's genius.... He goes on to say that they have many spots open if you want to join, but again sarcastically because we're sure once you step foot in the 'country club' you won't ever want to come back. The specific country club he's writing from is the Apalachee Correctional Institution in Sneads, Florida. And we hope he writes more because we really enjoy his company. He's been writing to us for a while and we're grateful for his dedication.

Nowadays

Nowadays are good, clean laundry comes back stinkin'. A friend went to the box. My neighbor had a heart attack. Saw a man kissing and touching another man. The food tasted like crap again. It's hot again.

Country Club DOC

I have a 6 1/2 ft. by 2 1/2 ft. bunk that I call my house, all my earthly possessions are two drawers that are welded to the bottom of it, a three digit master combination lock is my security from burglars, which can be opened with a piece of a coke can or kicked off, some people can even figure the combination out by turning the dial. In my bathroom I have 7 toilets and 5 urinals to choose from, I also have 12 sinks and 8 showers to choose from. In my dining room I have 25 tables that I get to use. There is always someone to talk to where I live, there are 72 other houses in my dorm and over 900 on the compound. There are two tall fences that surround our community with lots of razor wire and motion sensors and an armed gun car that patrols the perimeter so I don't have to worry about anyone breaking in or leaving.

There are neighbors on each side of me so I am never lonely, I always have someone to talk to and even when I don't want to talk or be bothered there is someone that will do that. In my house I don't have the option of turning the lights on or off. They control that. I don't have the option of staying up as late as I want to or going to sleep whenever I want to. I am never in total darkness because there are these yellow lights that stay on all the time. When I go eat in the dining hall, I can't just take my time and chew my food properly and enjoy my meal, because if I was to do that I would not have time to finish my meal. So I have to shovel it in as fast as I can so I can finish everything. But the food isn't worth tasting anyways the only real meal we get is chicken leg quarters baked with no seasoning on them, we also get hamburgers sometimes but there real small (not big enough for a grown man) all the rest of our meat is processed or it's ground turkey. (I hate turkey now) if you don't have money for canteen in here you will go hungry.

We also have a T.V. room, but I don't watch it too much, every time I try to watch it they cut it off right before the end of the show. (I hate that) for count or whatever other reason. We also have a rec field and a weight cage. The weights are welded on the bar. If you want to add weight you have to strap dumbbells to it, which is against the rules. Also here, there is plenty of work for everyone, no matter how big or small the job is, we all work for "free" well they do pay 10 days a month gain time, which doesn't apply to me because I have a mandatory minimum of 15 years. If you like the sound of this little country club there are plenty of openings, they will take you right on in, even if they don't have any openings they will build more. The choice is yours.

There is always someone to talk to where I live, there are 72 other houses in my dorm and over 900 on the compound. There are two tall fences that surround our community with lots of razor wire and motion sensors and an armed gun car that patrols the perimeter so I don't have to worry about anyone breaking in or leaving.

SUAVE Most of you probably look at gang dropouts as weak or disloyal, but we like to think of them another way at The Beat because we know how courageous such an act is. Especially in a place where gangs are formed as a survival mechanism and the mere interest in getting out can be detrimental to your life. Not only that, but while incarcerated we can get very lonely and so it's sometimes nice to have an associate or two to help the time pass by quicker. But if you're not part of that lifestyle anymore it can be very difficult to live a life behind bars. That's why we believe it takes an extremely strong person to do what he did. Now he's relaying his experiences to us so we can learn from his mistakes. And though most of you may not want to take heed to what he's saying, we're almost sure you will later on in life if you continue down the negative path you paved for yourself. He's writing from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA.

It's A Better Way

Hey allow me to extend my respect to you all at The Beat. My name is Leo M. aka Suave from Hayward. First, I would like to send a message out to all them young homies gang banging wasting their life away for something they know nothing about.

I've been in and out of prisons for the past sixteen years and my eyes are open. There is no loyalty in what I was fighting for. Only suffering was in my so-called struggle. I want the kids to know there is a better way of life to live. 'Cause when you're sitting in the pen in the hall, East Block, at San Quentin you'll see that all your homies are nowhere around. Yeah, most of you might be saying I'm no good 'cause I'm a Norte drop out. But it took a real man to do what I did and what I'm doing now, letting you kids know that there is more to life than being in the gang. Remember put God and your family first 'cause when times get hard they will never let you down!

The Beat Within

Man, good looking out for my first two papers of The Beat. Man, it's good reading. Like I said in my first letter to you guys I am a gang drop out. My eyes are open for a new life, a new way. I don't care what any one thinks of me. Gangs ain't a part of my life.

I want to teach our kids that the thug life ain't it... Well, I got lots to say of life in these walls so be looking for my letter and drawing. I would love to see my words and artwork in your paper. I wanted to know, can I get your paper every week? I would be very thankful keep up the good work.

Juvenile was paradise compared to this and things I've seen but I know there's much more to life than all the drugs, gangs, booze, girls, and being immature. I've learned I need to grow up and take my responsibility as a young man.

To Che

My one true love. Ever since you came into my life you made me a very happy man. I know what true love is, to love a good woman, to have a very meaningful religion! So baby keep your head up 'cause this bad dream will be over soon! Love always,

This is to my wife Cheryl Mora, God Bless...

GILBERT LEE HAMEL This next piece is powerful in not only is it a powerful poem by itself, but also because it was written by a forty year old man with Parkinson's disease. His letter to us, which we didn't publish is written with what you can tell is as much effort as this man could give. He was nice enough to have somebody else copy his poem down for us so we could read it. Now, that's dedication and determination. He's writing from Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA. We're sure he has enough in him to keep sharing his thoughtful ideas with us.

DAVID RUIZ What a respectful and loving letter... We're sure that if this next writer would've known how accepting we are here at The Beat, he probably would've sent us some of his poetry by now. We love poetry and anything else you want to write for us. Usually we focus more on the kids, but the we is for everyone. We enjoy pieces that teach us through your experience. That is to say, this is my life and how it came to be, you can follow my path or choose to take your own. We know that since your writing from the county jail in Phoenix, Arizona you've had your share of ups and downs, but we also know you're in need of support. The support we offer is projecting the voice you've tailored as a way to possibly keep a child from following your path. So please don't hesitate to drop some poems on us.

10 Years

Looking back at the past 10 years
Thoughts filling my face with lots of tears
Thinking about where I went wrong
The pain is coming on so strong
If I had just one more shout,
I'd erase the years my mistakes had brought,
And start all over with one more try,
Spread my wings and learn to fly
Into the right direction
Make the right connection,
I only want to see.
I only want to be set free then you could see
Better things that should've been.
Were taken away way back then.
If that had never happened to me.
Then you would know where I would be
In the right direction
Making the right connection
I only want to be, I only want to see
The man I was supposed to be...
Looking back at all those years,
Swimming through all those tears,
Thinking about how I could do so wrong
The pain seems to last so long
In the right direction, "I should've gone"
Making the right connection, "I should've done"
In the right direction
Making the right connection.

What's Up Beat

This is David Ruiz. I'm currently incarcerated at the Fourth Avenue County Jail in Phoenix, Arizona. I am 18 years old. I have been reading your subscriptions for quite some time now. I've enjoyed reading each and every piece of poetry in The Beat. I see some talent. I've been through a lot of the stuff some of those young men and women that express their feelings of being lost, feeling abuse as a young kid growing up in places that were real rough with gangs, drugs, alcohol, sex, murder, and tons of crime.

I thought my life was going nowhere. The reason I'm writing is because I've also got a talent from God to write poetry. I've been writing since I was 15 years old when I discovered my ability to write down my feelings, thoughts, and desires on a piece of ordinary paper. I have changed so much since then this final and very hard time incarcerated as an adult. Juvenile was paradise compared to this and things I've seen but I know there's much more to life than all the drugs, gangs, booze, girls, and being immature. I've learned I need to grow up and take my responsibility as a young man.

I appreciate you listening. I've just been wondering if there would be any chance I can share my experiences through my poetry on The Beat. I know your program is mostly for youth. But I would appreciate any help I could receive. I again thank you for your time and help I'll be looking forward to hear from you. But until then, take care and God bless.

Freedoms of swimming a fishing,
An attentive ear listening,
While my body sits imprisoned.
Few overstand this pain,
Notice the sunrays in misty rain

The Plain Truth

I would like to start with a little of my own perception, which lately in my mind has become somewhat of an obsession that human thought can be quite absurd. Now how can a man tell another man, as I've heard a homosexual man say, "All men have it in them, to really want to be gay!" but then I think if I am to respect you for what you are, why can't you respect you for what you are, why can't you respect me for who I am and understand that I just don't feel that way!

You might like yours stuffed in pants that are tight but me what's a turn on is sexy women with big breasts, small waist and big thighs and even bar fights. But then for such as I am I would be ridiculed for being masculine by other women to say then. I like too much this and I do too much that and in fact I'm a male chauvinist. Well if they want, I will show them this and show them that and what ever else they want to see. For how can I tell if the pursuit of a woman in its natural states, is not pursuit of happiness for me?

That is what is so absurd, would you tell a bull not to be a bull, as much as you tell a man I think his answer would be to cock his head, swish his tail, snort and then fart. And that is what is so absurd to me, how can you tell nature not to be natural, I can't see! And that's why in human thought, we can find that it would be more intelligent if we had the bull's simple thought because if we didn't think ourselves into so much of a knot, we wouldn't be so much worried about killing ourselves with our own man made nuclear bombs!

CREOLE Writing from a group home in Woodland, CA, we bring you this next writer who is all over the map with his ideas. First he writes a piece about how unnatural it is to be gay and how people are telling him that everyone has it in them. We've never heard that, it's usually how everyone is not supposed to have it in him, but of course his testosterone didn't keep him from doing so anyway. But then he finishes that very same piece with speaking about nuclear bombs and stuff. He concludes with two good poems. Hopefully, he can focus on one idea instead of briefly discussing many next time. We feel like he has a great mind, but maybe it's too great for us to understand...

Third Eye Blind

What do you know of ethnicities
Ethnicities and mind contemplations!

You know nothing of the rae and the pyramids leaving the third eye blind to the lives and the times of a Mesopotamian and Komentain indenousation

What do you know of a black peoples' hustle and struggle to survive in the many occupied places?

What do you know of the Creole persona of the Indian and African and those who caused our affliction to mark us into our end?
But we stand with pride in our lives
To become those of who we are!
And we bent not to become as those, who
Tried to take our lives at times although we bear the scars

Too Deep!

Deep into the depths of the mind, embedded.
Graves in the soul no way but to let it
Go, the meditations the way enter the contemplations!
Thought so deep the forefront is merely
Hereditary, fragments of contemplation.
Indigenous of areas too prone deep, so
Don't sleep because you might miss something
In the wake of your mistake, that is post
And is so far away that its now bleak!

Look into the thought of vision prisms enter the minds of
subconscious
But your mind is closed and has left you naked and exposed to the
negative inflictions
But mine mind is so deep it has left me exposed
To the x-rays and to bathe in the tear drops
Of those who could not make the change
So my depth is very explanatory
But the complications for you lie within
Enter the wheels spin
But the comprehension does not mark
The end, enter a warrior!

DESHAUN LAVENDER

The truths that Deshaun Lavender strings together in this powerful piece are all the more mind-blowing because he does it in poetic couplets throughout, revealing a prodigious talent — the kind that routinely gets overlooked and undervalued in prison. We're always honored when this thoughtful writer/poet graces The Beat Without from his cell at High Desert State Prison in Susanville, CA. Welcome back Deshaun!

My Point Of View

Piecing together peace,
Captured by corrupt police,
A nation protecting pedophile priest.
Mind envisioning,
Freedoms of swimming a fishing,
An attentive ear listening,
While my body sits imprisoned.
Few overstand this pain,
Notice the sunrays in misty rain,
Emotions submerged are thus
refrained,
Wish Tupac was reincarnated,
His murder truly investigated,
Assata Shakur liberty reinstated.

Precious jewels,
Produce sharpened tools.
Formed in expression our youth can
use.
Children are born every day,
Gifted in unique ways,
Dreams go unrealized due to where
they stay,
Fortunate to survive the next day.
Afflicted ills,
In Africa, the common cold kills.
This thought send chills,
People can't even afford vaccines,
medicine and pills.
Running from our own shadows

Like rowing a boat without paddles.
The task is useless,
A portion of our soul is ruthless,
Though not entirely fruitless.
These environs,
Concrete steel iron,
Constant gun firing,
Reduces the thought of retiring.
Combating a world wind,
Smart men with evil grins.
Will the Savior appear again
To redeem lost souls who sinned?
Believed Jesus was a pacifist,
Learned he rived against John the
Baptist,
Both influenced by pagan practice.
Rough in the paint, a human-sized
shark tank,
Reaching for my son while dodging
shanks,
Alive another day, I give thanks.

DJ By the time this gets published this next writer will have gotten out already and spent some time free. We wonder if he's still trying hard, or if he's back to his old ways. Maybe we'll never find out. In fact, we're hoping we never find out because doing this work we realize that most of the time we do hear from people later on in life it's usually because they've messed up again. We are wishing this young man the best and hope freedom is treating him well. He wrote this while incarcerated in Mesa, Arizona.

My life been hard

But I'm leavin' in a few days
So I'm finally here, I've made it so far
My life have changed
Even my attitude
I promise you I'll never be the same.

Changed

It took me sometime but I'm finally here
Been in and out of jail
And finally I've shed a tear
I miss my folks
I miss my family
But I should of thought of that when I was out
On the street sellin' dope.

MANUEL MONTANEZ The holidays are nearing and love is in the air. And what's more romantic than a lover going through the harshest of times only to find time within that time to express how he feels for the one he loves. Awe, that's very sweet. This next writer/poet is a real romantic and you'll see why when you read on. He's writing from Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA, and we don't usually prefer pieces about love because we know more times than not it's usually just someone lonely now that their freedom has been taken. But with him, we really feel like he'd be saying these things if he was out. Talk about being genuine...

Dream

It started like forever
That I longed for a soul mate,
Hiding a secret ache in my heart
That never was satisfied...
I can remember staring
Out at quiet star-filled night
Whispering prayers that someday
Somewhere I would find that one
Special person who was meant for me...
I imagined tears over sad things...
We would lapse into comfortable silences
As we read each others thoughts,
We would love each other passionately and
Totally heart to heart and soul to soul
I waited and dreamed and dreamed and waited
After a while I began to think
My dream was exactly that — only a dream
Then my love, "I met you!!"

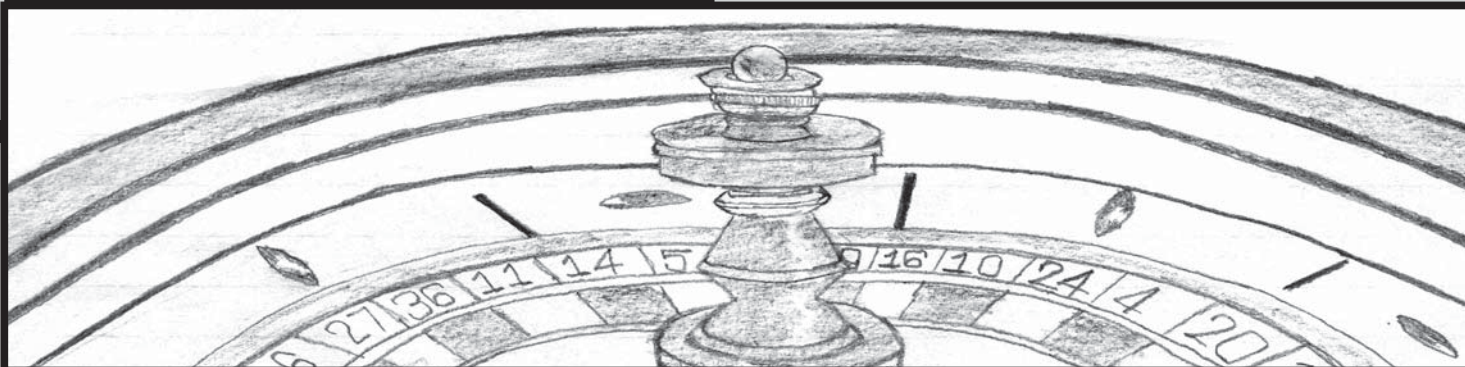
So Hard I Try

Everyday I try so hard to be that good man
I try so hard to accept the things I can
But it's hard without no helping hands
How can I give the world a try
If there's no one in sight
I try so hard and look what I've become
I've become no one. But some people say I'm someone.
If only the world wasn't so cruel
I wouldn't be locked up; I'll still be in school
I need to stop following my friends
And end up to be like my father's good man
But the world has misunderstood me
Know that I'm getting out on the thirteenth
I'ma change today
And I'ma live life a better way.

As we read each others thoughts,
We would love each other passionately and
Totally heart to heart and soul to soul
I waited and dreamed
and dreamed and waited

Common

Whoever said,
There is beauty in diversity
Must have been talking about our relationship...
Even in the midst of judgment and questioning glances,
Through the ups and downs of everyday life
We've remained close and we've held on
To our feeling for one another...
I know it hasn't been easy keeping our love so strong
But together we've done just that...
Each day finds me more in love with you then the
day before, most prepared to support to you, to comfort
you
to give our relationship this very best of me no matter
what...
the beautiful love we share proves that two people don't
have to be identical to find common interests and a
common purpose...
I love our lives together and it feels really good to know
That even though we're far apart
There is one very important thing we will always
have in common... Our love!!!



Breathe

They don't want me to breathe
 They want me to constrict my lungs
 They want me to breathe through my nose
 And not too deeply
 Conventional forces hate when people like me breathe
 Independent
 Fearless, spirited
 Heretics need to breathe;
 Outlaws need to breathe;
 Cowboys need to breathe.

Haunted

My soul is sick
 With pain
 It haunted by
 The truth
 My mind
 Is suicidal
 And my heart
 Bleeds for solace
 Questions ravage
 My brain
 Poverty steels my
 Heart
 All I can see
 Is what I
 Don't have
 All I have is
 What I
 Don't want

SUICIDE

This next writer used to go by the name Uhuru, but now he signs his name, "Suicide." He's writing from the California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi, CA, and this week he gives us something to think about. In his first creation he boldly challenges us to start pointing the finger at ourselves where it belongs. For in the end, we are the only ones who are totally responsible for our actions no matter how much time we spend trying to convince ourselves otherwise. He then finishes with two poems. The first called, "Haunted," and the second titled, "Breathe," but both equally powerful in the point they get across. We're glad he's maturing through his writing. Pretty soon he'll be writing self-help books for those of us who need advice from someone in his position.

No One To Blame

We all search for someone, or something, to blame don't we? But when you review the totality of your life experience, is there really one person, or thing, you can blame? If you answered wisely, the answer is "No"

Sure, there are many culprits who've contributed to your plight; but no one object bears the full weight of culpability. There's no one to blame!

I used to write under the alias "Uhuru" I read some of my old writings — which are two years old — and I see immaturity. Sure, I said some things that still hold true, but in my angst and hatred I said things that were irrational. For instance, in my rage I said: "Satan and Europeans are the source of every problem." This is irrational! The source of every great social problem is baseness and ignorance. It is stupidity and man's basic indecency that inspires him to actions that are injurious and destructive. When we learn to treat ourselves and others with honor and dignity the world will be a much better place. We all agree that pain hurts. And we disdain things that afflict us. But we must learn to not lash out in our woundedness. Too often we mitigate our pain by hurting others, this is wrong.

Bottom line: Stop searching for people to blame. Yes, there are some guilty people out there; but if you keep looking to be the victim, you will never better yourself. Secondly, don't try to make others miserable because you are in pain. It may bring you immediate satisfaction but it doesn't bring you honor or a better life.

Bottom line: Stop searching for people to blame. Yes, there are some guilty people out there; but if you keep looking to be the victim you will never better yourself.

DREAMER

Writing from the Preston Youth Correctional Facility (a Youth Authority Institution) in Lone, CA, we give you a special poet that we first met in our workshops in Hillcrest (San Mateo County Juvenile Hall). Now he's moved on to the Youth Authority where he's going to finish up his time, yet he still finds time to keep us updated. We really appreciate it. In this issue he writes a quick letter and a poem about missing his girl. And anyone who's been locked up will know that it gets so lonely in there that we can't help but miss the people who love us. So with that said, read on and see if his words ring true with what you're going through in your own life. We liked it, let's see if you do...

To The Beat Within

First, I would like to start this letra off by sending all my love to the homies. This is the homie Dreamer from San Mateo County. I finally made it to CYA. Stuck in the struggle but stayed on my feet. I got to do a couple of bullets here in Preston but its nada, I'll survive.

If it's cool with you guys I would like y'all to send me The Beat and topics but I got a poem that I wrote it's pretty cool check it out.

Chicana Race

Incarceration has me sick minded
 Not into shhh like this but for you
 I'll find it mentally numb and outside world blinded
 Even though I barely got your letra's through mail.
 Forget it I was raised in baby jail
 Now I'm in baby pen.
 Now I'm keeping trucha. Will you be mine?
 And stick by my side since you're already my beautiful
 friend,
 Through thick and thin
 I miss that brown skin
 Beautiful face, sexy body and that Chicana race
 I want you not what's below your waist
 Caress your body and keep you safe
 Vatos would know that you're my girl and no their
 place.
 If they testing waters I'd probably be back on another
 case
 You know what I am and the city I'm from
 I want to enjoy good times with you
 But hard times to come
 All I'm saying is loyalty will stand us as one
 Are you going to see I wrote this with meaning
 With intentions for you to be only mine

CHUBBS One more day, one more Beat, and one more love poem being released. This next writer is writing from N.A. Chaderjian, a Youth Authority institution in Stockton, CA. And he uses one more day at the beginning of each line, which causes us to believe he will forever remain hopeful. That's a courageous thing to do when you're in the position he's in. We appreciate it and will wait for many more days for him to hit us with something else.

One More Day

One more day without you by my side
One more day I have cried
One more day I think constantly about you
One more day I feel so sad and blue
One more day I miss your sweet kiss
One more day I feel so lonely and hopeless
One more day and I will be home
One more day and I will no longer be alone
One more day and I will have myself a bride
One more day and my feelings for you will no longer have to hide
One more day and I will have you in my arms forever
One more day and we will forever be together...

GERALD CHAVEZ Writing from High Desert State Prison in Susanville, CA, we give you a man who hits us with 'some real talk.' Most of his real talk has to do with the power of education and what's more real than learning. He gives great examples of why knowledge is so important. He also makes comparisons that are so similar it lets you understand what he's talking about even if you didn't at first. We really appreciate writing like this... writing that's 'some real talk.'

Some Real Talk

I'm not an intellectual by any means
But I am a man with a strong hunger for knowledge,
Of any type!
Wisdom may linger, but knowledge will come,
It's said the limit of my tongue is the limit of my mind
Because all I know is what I have words for,
During one of my many feats, I've learned that language
Has created the word loneliness to express pain of
Being alone and the words of solitude to express the
glory
Of being alone.
I've learned that a good book and letter writing are
The perfect devices for combining solitude with good
company.
All of us in here are watchers of that television out there
And the traffic on the tier, but few of us are observers.
Everyone is looking, but not too many are seeing what
that
Dummy Box (T-V) is doing.
Many of you are quick to shoot off at the mouth
It's also well known that speaking without thinking is like
Shooting without taking aim, nature has blessed us with one
Tongue, but two ears, that way we may hear from others
Twice as much as we speak.
I have also observed many men with different
personalities,
I've come to understand that every man has three
characters
1. That which we exhibit. 2. That which we actually have
3. And that which we think we have!
To always stay hungry, I keep in mind that, a man without
knowledge is like a flower without a scent. And if you
want to apply it to prison life, a man without knowledge
is like a piece without a handle and a good tip! Don't be
dull, get sharp and seek that knowledge!

Many of you are quick to shoot off at the mouth
It's also well known that speaking without thinking is like
Shooting without taking aim, nature has blessed us with one
Tongue, but two ears, that way we may hear from others
Twice as much as we speak.

CHRISTOPHER LEWIS We have yet another first time writer on the prowl to get his ideas out so people can either take them or leave them. And he does so in a way that leaves us wanting more. Obviously just a snippet of a much larger piece, Christopher sends us about three paragraphs and then says if we're interested he'll write more. Well, first of all we want to read the rest of this piece, so could you send that for starters? And secondly, of course we want to hear more. That's what we're here for. So next time you write us, can you send us a full piece? We're using this one because it's your first time and we know how empowering it can be to see your piece published. Thank you. We're waiting for the rest... Oh, by the way, he's writing from the Illinois Department of Corrections in Sumner, Illinois.

The Psychology Of The African-American (Male) Prisoner

Psychology is the study, scientifically, of behavior and the mental process. African-Americans is a false term (pseudo), because Africa is a continent, and it has many countries with different cultures. The "male" is the "provider" and of course we know what a prisoner is, or do we?

In my opinion and obvious observations of the African Americans male prisoners, he is: highly aggressive, misogynistic, and about another 100 negative terms you can think of. Immediately, I ask the question, why? Especially, when I also see quite the opposite everyday, not to mention when I introspect myself.

Of course, to understand the mentality of people, we must go into their past, because the brain is literally shaped by its environment at an early age. Also, we must consider the factor of heredity (native). So, why have so many "different" people ended up in situations resulting in the phenomenon of incarceration?

If interested in more commentaries on this subject matter and many more, please let me know...

BROWNIE Damn, feelings about relationships and the things that come with them can be harsh. In a world where playing people is a badge of honor this next writer fits right in. For though it's obvious she's been played, it's also obvious that she's done her share of 'playing' too. How can one get mad at someone for doing the same thing they're doing? Well, she's writing from somewhere in Redwood City, CA, so beware she might be coming to play with a heart near you.

Playa

(It goes out to all them crazy vatos)
You call yourself a playa
'Cause it seems you played a few
You didn't realize it was me playing you
It was true you were good at your game and came out a winner
But compared to me you were still a beginner
There's still a lot of learning and you ain't shhh yet
If you didn't give a damn then why are you so upset
Although you tried to play me
Things didn't end up your way
'Cause you're on your knees begging me to stay
How does it feel to lose
How does it feel to be a failure?
How does it feel to be played?

My life has been through a lot of pain,
The authority took my life
behind these bars.
I feel so ashamed
There's nothing I can do
but do my time till 2007.
This crime wasn't mine,
It was the devil's time when I committed
that crime.

ACE It's a shame, but no matter how many pieces we publish or how much we stress the fact that glorifying certain things is irrelevant, we still get poems like these. 'Who I Am' is a great title that could be used in many different ways. This next writer who sends us a return address of Mesa, Arizona, thinks he's the biggest, baddest person alive, or at least that's what we get from his poem. We know we'll get a few responses to this piece, but please be easy on him. We don't want to discourage anyone from writing.

Who I Am

I'm all about hustlin' and bangin'
And I ain't gonna be changin'
'Cause this is who I am
And if ya' got a problem wit' that
I'll hit you wit my damn trans-am
'Cause this is just who I am
Now lets talk about my life
And why I'm always carrying a knife
Or why I'm bangin' your wife
'Cause I'm always in the street
Puttin' up new beats
And I'm always on the same block
Sellin' the rock
There's nothing I could do
Except sit back and drink a brew
And make easy money
And bone easy honeys
And if you know what's up
Than you will throw it up

GILSON A. We've all experienced pain and we all have different ways of coping, but one thing we can all attest to is that a particular kind of pain is never permanent. Things are always temporary so if you can bear the pain for however long you have to, there's always light at the end of the tunnel. This next writer describes his own pain as he writes from Dewitt Nelson, a Youth Authority Institution in Stockton, CA. 2007 is right around the corner now, so hold tight...

Pain

My life has been through a lot of pain,
The authority took my life behind these bars.
I feel so ashamed
There's nothing I can do but do my time till 2007.
This crime wasn't mine,
It was the devil's time when I committed that crime.
My family is hurt,
'Cause I listen to the devil and that's a lot of pain.
Mom cries cause she live her kids,
My mom wishes for me to come out and have a new life
All I think is my family and friends and that's full of pain.
When I am behind bars I feel empty.
That's full of pain.



THE GHETTO PHILOSOPHER We first met this next writer in our workshops in San Francisco County Juvenile Hall, better known as YGC, and then he moved on to Log Cabin Ranch where he continued to participate in our workshops. Now he's writing from San Francisco County Jail in San Bruno, CA, and he needs our support. He's been loyal to The Beat all this time and we appreciate him, so we'll do the best we can to be just as loyal to him. Whatever happens from there is up to time and fate, so lets end this intro so they can go to work...

Pulled over for speeding in the
wrong direction
Now booked on lack of possession
Of my knowledge and what I've
been neglecting
Time is giving and time I'm
accepting

Self-Talk

Self-introspectin'
Self-checkin'

While reflecting on so called loved ones neglecting
From them there isn't much I'm expecting
Because it's God I'm respecting
Driving through life trying not
To crash in this traffic He's directing
Pulled over for speeding in the wrong direction
Now booked on lack of possession
Of my knowledge and what I've been neglecting
Time is giving and time I'm accepting
Cause now's my chance to sharpen my greatest weapon

I fear for myself for the chance I may fail
'Cause try as I may I've been yet to prevail
Working diligently towards a plan to advocate my success
If I'm good at bad I could be good at good, more or less

check out the rest of Carl's BWO piece on page 50

